

TIME EXPOSURES


BY SEARCH-LIGHT

*Being Portraits of Twenty Men and
Women famous in Our Day & together
with Caricatures of the Same by Di-
vers Artists & to which is appended An
Account of a Joint Report Made to
Jehovah on the Condition of Man in
the City of New York [1926] by
Julius Caesar, Aristotle and
a Third Individual of
Less Importance*



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FOREWORD:

Search-Light Attempts to Get Out of It

The author of these impertinent portrayals most humbly begs the pardon of his unconscious sitters. They, at least beforehand, were his friends: they were men and women with whom he spent happy hours, with whom he broke bread and the XVIIIth Amendment. If they consider themselves his friends no longer, SEARCH-LIGHT pleads with them to believe him when he says that the fault was not his. He got into bad company. (To which of all those good men and women has something of the kind not happened?) He got, to be precise, into the company of the editors of *The New Yorker*. And theirs is the fault . . . these ribald, irreverent, practical gentlemen's. For they prevailed on poor SEARCH-LIGHT to shine upon his friends in public: to shine upon all their virtues (for which of course he could not forgive them), and upon all their failings (for which he generously loves them). These hard editors blandished poor SEARCH-LIGHT to commit the infamies herein recorded: even alas! they bribed him with coins of the Realm.

SEARCH-LIGHT hopes that one and all of his friends, whom he has here exposed, will visit the editors of *The New Yorker*, get their just rage out of their systems, and straightway be his friends again. He begs them to recall

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his otherwise discreet and proper conduct: to remember that never in his whole career has he done anything like this—never, indeed, written *anything* for money: and to believe him when he promises that SEARCH-LIGHT will not shine on *them* again.

As to others of SEARCH-LIGHT's *friends*, here unrevealed, who may henceforth dwell in perturbation lest they some day be similarly exposed, SEARCH-LIGHT tells them that there is a means . . . a very simple one . . . whereby they may procure protection, in case he should ever fall into bad company again. They need but speak with him privily and he will name his figure.

SEARCH-LIGHT.

I

IN TUNE WITH THE FINITE



MAN I STENGE

OTTO KAHN

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I

IN TUNE WITH THE FINITE

OTTO KAHN's interest in art and artists is, after all, his interest in himself. If he feels—he is so courteous a gentleman—that you want him to speak of Service or similar large-sounding subjects, he will do so. And without hypocrisy, even if without too great self-knowledge. But Service and Power and all the other high-pitched capital words are not the key to the matter. Kahn is an artist of a kind, and he loves his kind.

If you would see him clear, then, you must begin by piercing such obstructions as the Opera, the old New and the new Little Theaters, foreign decorations, banking and the chorus of courtship forever chanted to Wealth. These are not alien excrescences upon the man; but they too are not the essence. You must forget as well the country estates, the private golf-links, even the town residence, cold and unreal as a museum. Remote from the chill marble stairs, you come upon a room in which two fires are burning. One is a painting by Botticelli on the wall; the other is a low-lying log in the hearth.

Otto Kahn stands at the tea-table. It is the end of the day—the intermission between the day of the banker and

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the night of the patron. He pours himself a cup of tea which he forgets to drink. He spreads thick jam on thin toast, and this he eats with schoolboy relish. His face is a boy's; but no lad has this ease. The gray of his hair suggests a careful elegance, rather than his age. The rose in the lapel is fresh, although the day is old. And Otto Kahn is fresh. He seems strange to this pompous house; strange to the formidable world of Money which he must, after all, have mastered in order to be able to play the pleasant lavish game that he has made of his life. If he talks "seriously," the chasm grows between this amiable utterer of words and what you know he is. The hands are rather chubby. What grasp have they of "ideas"? If you examine these hands while he is talking, he will instinctively hide them in his pockets.

There is in his smile a kind of pleading—for what? in his firm eyes a modesty—toward whom? But now, his subject grips him. It is "ideas" no longer. He talks of life. The boy hands clench; the body is harder. The open face loses its genial and generous inquiry—becomes sensual, ruthless. Here, where was an actor in a stylish game, is a man monstrous in self-absorption. You begin to understand the many mansions, the many theaters . . .

It is a complex world in which Kahn moves; and himself as complex as his world. He is fond of telling a tale of his beginning. Forty years ago, he was a clerk in a banking house in Carlsruhe. There were stamps quite literally to be licked and to be stuck on envelopes. Kahn licked more stamps and pasted them more neatly than any other clerk. "And so, he became the Head of Kuhn, Loeb and the

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Mæcenæ of our Rome." Kahn misses the point of his tale. This is no efficiency-confession for the *American Magazine*. In licking stamps, Otto Kahn was not more industrious, not more intelligent than the others: he was more artistic.

The key to the man is a virtuosic grace. Grace of harmony and of *at-homeness*. Through the Wall Street canyon, Kahn blows like a zephyr. Under the looming granite walls, he walks with round cheeks. Our world is a delirium of electric blares: Kahn's eyes twinkle. Our world is a holocaust of dying civilizations: Kahn knows not of death. He is a happy lover, lyrical and unattached.

Accident, then—irony? his high position in this self-same world? Not a bit of it. We've got the world wrong. Kahn is a better guide than all the statistics and all the realistic novels and all the communist cartoons. Kahn who is canny and sentimental, generous and ruthless, sensuous and playful, shrewd and immature—Kahn who is so good at life, and who—discussing what he is and does—can talk such unimaginable nonsense. Like the tight rosebud that tips his morning coat, he doth tip Wall Street. But no. The analogy is bad. It takes a valet and a florist to select the sparkling *boutonnière*. This is artifice. One can, with violent effort, picture Otto Kahn without his rosebud. But the man himself is integral of our age. Cut Kahn off and you would at once see this romantic childish monster known as the Age of International Finance grow another Kahn to take his place.

Most men who achieve power do so by laborious study of the world they aim to conquer, and by ruthless excision of those traits in themselves which do not chime with their

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world. Not Kahn. He had at the outset the qualities, the appetites, the vices to make him what he is. That is why his face reveals no struggle. That is why he can say sincerely: "I feel as young as when I was twenty-five: I hope I am not much wiser." He is not much wiser. He ignores the wisdom which he does not need. That is why he is seldom tired, seldom nervous, usually happy. He is at no odds with himself. He is this dapper, personable gentleman—so full of individual judgments and tastes and traits; and ways of talking and ways of enjoying life. And yet, deeply, he is no individual at all: he is a swift and lyric symbol of the world he thinks he has conquered. He is an element of modern life. He is fate for once smiling and having a whale of a time.

His story is soon told. Born in Mannheim he took to banking, as a duck to water. He learned English and finance in London. Ere he was thirty he was himself, in New York. He married into the Kuhn, Loeb clan. In 1897, the austere Jacob Schiff, head of the House, believer in Jehovah, believer in family, believer in *facts*, believer above all in the eternal warfare between the world and the Jew, looked at this junior partner, new as a sunrise, and had a revelation of the passing of his ancient world—of the advent of an era that was to sweep, in a parabola of brilliance, beyond the realms of his eye.

And Otto Kahn proceeded to express himself. This strict self-expression was to be a conspicuous part in the expression of our age. But Kahn did not reason it out—not till after the fact. He had selected a career ludicrously well-paid beyond the common measure. He grew rich. He did not grow deluded. Money freed him; and Otto Kahn was

IN TUNE WITH THE FINITE

occasionally sorry that he had no God to thank. But he refused to be shackled by his wealth. Money is, after all, a circulation of the blood in the social body. It should be. It was, and is, in the youthful life of Otto Kahn. It flows: it induces no hardening of the arteries. It makes Kahn "feel good."

And so he spends a nickel every morning, to get from his residence at Fifth Avenue and Ninety-first Street to his office at William and Wall. He takes the subway. He chooses this daily bath in the populous current because he likes currents—because he loves circulations. For a similar reason, he braves the benches of the Provincetown Theater; careers through mixed companies of men, women, girls, drinking the effervescent wine of their unbottled youth. He enjoys this. He does what he enjoys. He dictates, probably, more personal letters every day than any other large man of affairs in a week. He is in touch with the romantic, ribald anarchists of art. Perhaps they make pictures and music no one understands: at least they're *alive*. Kahn flows through a processional of contacts. He needs no intimate friends, and he has none. There are too many thrilling hearts about, for single-hearted devotions. What he loves in this pageantry of life is the pageant; no wonder money streams lovingly through his fingers.

If you could take a slow moving picture of Kahn's intricate day, you would be amazed at its grace. Gesture, posture, word and act melt into a unitary flow. The man is currency, too: chemic currency like the instinctive life of a flower. So he has blossomed, so he will fade. Quietly, pleasantly, resigned. And all the rest of him is accessory.

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Of course, he makes innumerable speeches; he has even written books for which such prime fellow virtuosi as Theodore Roosevelt wrote laudatory introductions. Of course, he discusses high topics—Finance, Politics, the Future of Jazz. It's part of the delicious game. Part of it, too, to be a little taken in while one plays it. But Kahn is not taken in very deeply. The mechanism of a vast banking house requires a brain for running. Kahn has that kind of brain. Banking is a social mechanism. The banker needs a mechanic's brain. Like his money world—that weave of subtly stressed, interacting, finite forces—Kahn's brain is a machine. It has the limitation of a machine. As brains go in a world of philosophers, scientists and poets, the mechanic's brain is not of a high order.

But this brain, explaining the wealth of Otto Kahn, does not explain the man. A subtle, dynamic nostalgia moves Kahn into those very realms from which his technical mind would seem to bar him. It is not true that Kahn can give only cash to artists. He has a restless conscience to give also. He is moved by spiritual effort in these realms beyond him. He gives to artists, both good and bad, because he gives to the impulse of the artist. His wisdom in giving is not to wish to give too wisely. Otto Kahn, who has had success, demands his share of failure! If he did not occasionally finance a "loafer"—present his own 'cello to a musician who disappeared—back the wrong artistic horse, he would not be the ebullient man he is.

Of course, Kahn has fun out of his importation of the Stars of Europe—Diaghileff, Copeau, Gémier, Stanislavsky; out of building an Opera; out of equipping ambulant art

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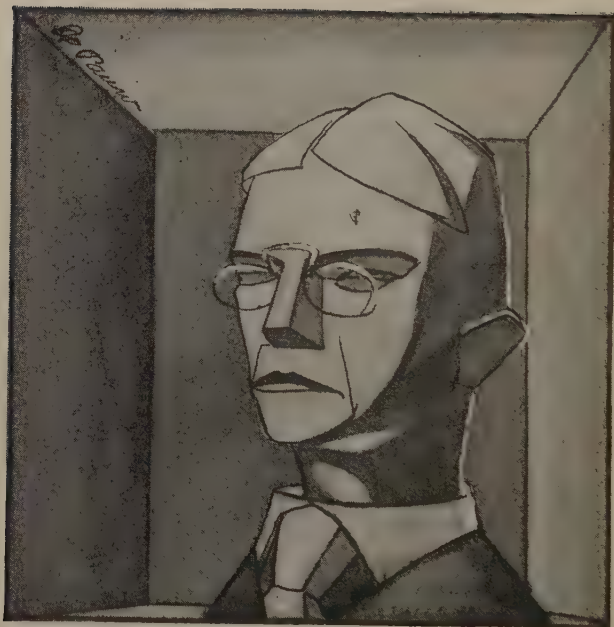
museums. But his most personal joy is not here. He holds the center of the stage at the Metropolitan auditions with a clear, forgivable underemphasis—since he enjoys it: he gathers the American great at lunch to meet the freshest celebrity from Europe and regales them with forgivable platitudes—since he enjoys it. But he is at his best at home, offering an hour (and a check for a year's leisure) to some humble poet. Here, the man's note is purest. For here, in helping, he is receiving what he needs. He looks at his Italian Primitives, at the illuminated manuscripts and at the bibelots on his Gothic tables with an easier eye. He has "atoned"—his word—for his wealth. Kahn quotes Oscar Wilde: "‘God shows what he thinks of wealth by the people on whom he bestows it.’ . . . Perhaps I can give the Divine Powers a slightly better opinion." This conscience, this unease, this almost wistful, almost humble will to "make good" some spiritual debt he has never analyzed, never consciously acknowledged—this, added to the banker and to the player of life, gives you Otto Kahn.

Sociable, he is alone—a contented atom moving through endless provisional combinations. Replete with experience, he is a child at sixty—avid and naïve. Cannily sure of himself, he is cautious and timid. Delicate in manner, his face reveals the force of his will. Favored by fortune and aware of his luck, he is bored by gambling, and haunted by the mystery of failure. Acknowledger only of the finite kingdom over which he rules, he is the patron and the friend of arts whose very end is to burst his kingdom asunder. All these contradictions to make the ultimate New Yorker: Mr.

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Otto Kahn, who lunches with the prime minister of Babylon and dines with the creator of a Word which shall destroy Babylon, the Minister and Mr. Otto Kahn. In the good time he is having, in the future he not too unconsciously abets, he proves the youth and mystery of our world.

II
A KIND MAN



WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

II

A KIND MAN

SURELY, he needs no introduction. If you take *Scribner's* or the *Ladies' Home Journal* you read his genial moralities on books. If you are a woman who improves her mind, you have heard his cordial lectures. If you are an old Grad of Yale, you know Billy—you've thrilled with Billy over the virtues of Tennyson or of the Campus. If you're none of these, and yet can read, you have seen his name attached to quotes in book ads: ever so enthusiastic praise about ever so many novels, dispensed by Professor Phelps for the brief season ere they passed away.

A most successful, flourishing gentleman, you take it. Even if the endless novels he discovered to be "splendid!" died the death. You're wrong.

Kindness has killed him: kindness to others. When, nearly forty years ago, this graduate of Yale and Harvard announced that he was going to be a teacher, it was clear to the group of men—already large—who loved him, that literature, "noblest of the arts," and teaching, "noblest of the professions," had gained an athletic champion. Here was a new kind of pedagogue—as new in his field as Roosevelt was in his: and indeed the two men were friends and played tennis together and always the face of Billy Phelps was bright when he spoke of Teddy. Phelps was tall, square, clear-

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eyed; his words came in volleys of decision; he had enthusiasm of the sort which in America more usually went to the boosting of political bunk, or to the selling of commercial gimerack. And William Lyon Phelps was "out" for literature! for the love and the spreading of Letters! He was going to popularize high thinking with all the vigor of pioneering, with all the vim of commerce. This was a new event in 1892!

And this has been the at least outward splendor of his career. Born in New Haven in 1865 and a teacher at Yale since he was twenty-seven, Professor Phelps has stood before many generations of students and of pedagogues, spreading an infectious gospel. He has believed in his gospel; he has believed in his audiences; he has been convinced throughout that they could carry off and make their own the fine freight of his lessons about books. And by a subtle, invisible, sinister-smiling process, the audiences of Professor Phelps have rotted the substance of his intellectual faith, have softened the lines of his critical acumen. Until at the end, this man who gave his life to bind all brothers and all sisters in the spell of beauty became a spellbinder, giving to the crowd what the crowd liked: a promoter of shoddy in place of masterpieces.

Stand gently by, O young and cruel critics who are wont to laugh at the contemporary Phelps, extolling some treacle by Hutchinson or some carpentry by Mrs. Wharton with the same high adjectives he once reserved for Marlowe and Dostoievski. Stand by him gently ere ye judge this parser of Longfellow for ladies who in his truer self lauded the clean obscenities of the Elizabethans. For irony has made a

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prey of a gifted gentleman; nor has tragedy disdained him.

If you could hear him at Yale Chapel read the morning lesson of the Bible, your caustic mood might grow more meditative. Never was a more gallant, more authentic reading of the Divine Account. No exhorter's snuffle, no priestly sing-song, no ministerial condolence—Phelps makes the word living and robust. A high, gray man speaks the Truth before you. Phelps is a Christian. All his days and all his nights he has believed and he has tried to act as his faith told him a Christian shall. The same clear yet sumptuous voice uttering a Psalm sounds in the house he lives in: in its unobtrusive hospitality, in a certain forthright purity of tone within the very walls of his New England mansion. He has read and he believes his Bible, like a lover. He has lived with his wife like a lover. He has taught English to bully boys—coaxing them from football to Browning—like a lover. More (and here we come to the root of the matter) he has accepted America, accepted democracy, like a lover. A lover convinced that all is well; a lover convinced that *this* mob is noble, that *this* particular pack of sentimental protestations about liberty and equality is true.

Kindness. Let me encourage. Let me foster, warm, smile. . . . Was this what his Christian doctrine and his American doctrine moved him to? He was too large of heart to say No. And the toll of his benevolence through thirty years is that his Yea counts little. He has his following. But the youth to whom he gave his life—even that part of them which thrilled when he taught English—turn from him now and grow ashamed to admit that they were thrilled.

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In the first days of the war, Professor Phelps was a Pacifist. Did not Christ tell us to give good for evil? He took the chair at a Pacifist meeting in Yale, at which David Starr Jordan was the principal speaker. And the crowd who had loved him when he taught them the thrills of Shakespeare, awake now to the greater thrills of legalized and sanctified murder, threw rotten eggs at Billy Phelps! Did he see then, that he had won their love by getting down to their level and giving them—professionally—what they want? Perhaps. But not long after the Professor saw the light—and declared war for his own part against Germany.

There is another true story about this man who, after championing the Russians and the most virile masters of old England, grew even more famous by heralding a hundred bad first American novels as “splendid literature.” Once, by chance, there came to study under him a boy of genius. (This was late in his career.) And the lad, warmed by him like all his students, went away and wrote a novel. And brought it to his teacher. Had not Phelps inspired him to give his best, to put the truth as he saw it into lovely forms? Phelps read the manuscript and was shocked. This would never do. Not in America! In France, there were people like this. In Russia, it was good and true to write so. But America, the kind land, the pure land, America the happy? He had the boy in his library. First editions marshaled to the ceiling, and the log fire crackled.

“No,” said William Lyon Phelps, “I cannot recommend your book for publication. Listen, my friend, and I shall tell you why. I have made one mistake that covers all my years. I have been too kind—and too willing. I have

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praised too many books, not because they were good books but because the authors were good, deserving fellows. I must put a stop to this. I shall begin with you."

So, after extolling contemporary brass for gold—because it was kind, because it was comfortable, Phelps tripped into irony at last, and thrust the true gold from him.

Deeply he knows that he has erred: and he is among the unhappiest of men. He was no fool; but he elected to be good to fools. (All crowds are fools.) He elected to believe in fools. (All flattered democracies are foolish.) He elected to serve fools—and what could this mean but to give them, *more or less*, what they asked for? (All popular demand is folly.) And now the folly sits on his own gray head. And the fine critical equipment he was born with is dispersed. And the nervous, athletic spirit of his life grows flatulent and wistful. And this man, who thirty years ago prophesied true American books, finds no creator of them all to hail him.

Perhaps he was too eager to succeed, although success as he wanted it was merely to serve and to love—surely no ill desire. Perhaps he was not eager enough first to understand. To understand that to serve, often one must hurt: that to serve a democracy, one must be willing to stay despised and alone.

And yet—and yet, you shall not shuffle him off too easily, O cruel critics. He dreamed to be an intellectual leader—and his chief leadership is over flabby women. He dreamed to be the prophet of beauty; and he has praised more tinsel than any other critic of his stature. He has hurt what he would help, depraved what he would love—in the name of

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truth and in the name of beauty. But even in his failure, he has given us much—for he has given himself.

Irony when it sears makes the mark of truth. Tragedy, when it kills, kills what is contemptible. So William Lyon Phelps has a true value for us. He personifies the most American of disasters: the disaster of Good Intentions, when they are not fortified by intellectual hardness, when they are not drained of all sentimental juices. Professor Phelps, who has placed before his classes so many poetic tragedies to study, gives us at the end the tragedy of his career. Gives us the tragedy of the attempt at public service which does not begin with service to the most ruthless personal ideal.

Kindness has killed him—kindness to others: and killed the possible uses of his kindness. What we need for nurture is a cool rigor of the mind. If only Professor Phelps had dared be kinder to himself . . .

III

WHITE PAINT AND GOOD ORDER



GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz

III

WHITE PAINT AND GOOD ORDER

SHE is a woman who has fused the dark desires of her life into a simplicity so clear that to most of her friends she is invisible. The smile on her face—half nun's, half Norn's—is due to this. She has fame as a painter: the name of Georgia O'Keeffe is known wherever people care for lovely things on canvas. But she is a woman. She dislikes this invisibility of hers. She wants to be *seen*.

So much love around her that does not touch her! So much ecstatic praise that warms her about as much as would fireworks in the air of a winter night. In the old days when she was a teacher of "art" in a Texas country school, she got used to solitudes. She dreamed not of fame then, but of a New York welcoming and appreciative. She did not guess that in this Manhattan vortex of artists, amateurs and critics she was to find a spiritual silence beside which the Texas prairies shouted with understanding.

So O'Keeffe smiles. It is a simple, kindling smile: it lights the face with a maternal splendor. But the confused men and women who behold it, will not have it so. They insist that her smile, like her pictures, is mysterious. The girl's work, they argue, is Kabala. The girl herself is the Sphinx. Really, O'Keeffe, despite her gifts and her benevolent spirit, has not had a chance.

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Look at her. In her black dress, the body is subtly warm. The hands have a slow grace, as if their natural cleverness had all been turned into such arts as nursing and caressing. Her voice is like her hands. Her face is very dark and the eyes are deep: but there's a twinkle in them, both intelligent and humorous. Does a peasant want to be aloof? Does a woman want to be worshiped? Don't you believe it. It's far more fun to be seen—and to be understood. O'Keeffe's years have deepened, not complicated her. If this town were a bit simpler, a bit less impure, it might be at home with her simple purity. If it were less daft on polysyllables, it might hear her monosyllabic speech. If it were less noisy in its great affairs, it might hear her chuckle.

For O'Keeffe is a peasant—a glorified American peasant. Like a peasant, she is full of loamy hungers of the flesh. Like a peasant, she is full of star-dreams. She is a strong-hipped creature. She has Celt eyes, she has a quiet body. And as to her esoteric Wisdom, I suspect that it comes down to this: O'Keeffe has learned, walking through an autumn wood, how the seeming war of shapes and colors—the red and yellow leaves, the shrilling moods of sky—melts into a single harmony of peace. This is the secret of her paintings. Arabesques of branch, form-fugues of fruit and leaf, aspirant trees, shouting skyscrapers of the city—she resolves them all into a sort of whiteness: she soothes the delirious colors of the world into a peaceful whiteness.

And then, along came the experts. And they prated mystic symbols: or Freudian symbols. How could you expect New York to admit that what it likes in O'Keeffe is precisely the fact that she is clear as water? cool as water?

WHITE PAINT AND GOOD ORDER

New York is sure, it is too sophisticated to care for anything but cocktails. What a blow to our pride, to confess that it is neither more nor less than the well-water deepness of O'Keeffe which holds us! Better pour the simple stuff of her art into cunningly wrought goblets of interpretation. Better talk of "mystic figures of womanhood," of "Sumerian entrail-symbols," of womb-dark hieroglyphics. Doubtless, all this would make the woman tired—if she could not smile.

She was born in a town, prettily named Sun Prairie, in Wisconsin. She liked painting so much that even her visit to New York, where she studied with Chase and at Teachers College, did not turn her off. Then, she proceeded south and got her living by teaching clumsy boys in Texas how to make pictures of vases and oranges and sunsets. The War drove her north. You wonder why: and if you understand, you will begin to know the woman. O'Keeffe knew nothing about international events, and she cared even less. She had no desire to enlist; she was not aching to be a nurse in France. The War, quite simply, interfered with her teaching art to boys in Texas. O'Keeffe taught art by linking it with life—chiefly, by linking it with careless talks about all kinds of matters. And now she found that there was a subject she must steer clear of: she could no longer say she did not like bloodshed and empty rhetoric and lies—since a whole particular set of these had become sacred and patriotic. They got in the way of the lines of the vase with roses she had set up for her pupils.

Before her, to the north, had come certain charcoal drawings. O'Keeffe had a girl chum in New York. In lieu of

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letters, ever since 1915, she had been sending these sketches. And the girl friend, despite O'Keeffe's stern forbiddance, had shown the things to Alfred Stieglitz. And Alfred Stieglitz, after forty years in comradeship with art, said he had been waiting for just these particular modest drawings. So when the famous gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue gave its farewell show (the War having put a stop to it) O'Keeffe's things were on the walls.

You will observe the woman in all this. No conquering New York with shrewd ambition. She was quite ready to stay on in Texas. The south was quiet, and indolent. O'Keeffe got on right well with the big boys—until the War turns them loose. Then Alfred Stieglitz draws her northward. Now, it just happens that Stieglitz is a man who must live in a whirlwind. Wherever the man is, there a whirlwind must foregather. And O'Keeffe—who is the spirit of quiet and of peace—finds her haven in this whirlwind world of Stieglitz. It is always hushed and still at the vortex of a maelstrom. If you don't believe it, look at Georgia O'Keeffe.

This genius for quiet is the woman. It is the essence of her. From her pioneer fathers, wandering west, she has her ability to pitch her camp in any country and in any season. But the capacity for quiet is older: it is a deep, a peasant virtue of her mothers.

O'Keeffe is very like a tree. Her arms and her head stir like branches in a gentle breeze. (Her ears are pointed like a faun's and her voice, like leaves, has a subtle susurration.) She is almost as quiet as a tree, and almost as instinctive. If a tree thinks, it thinks not with a brain but with every

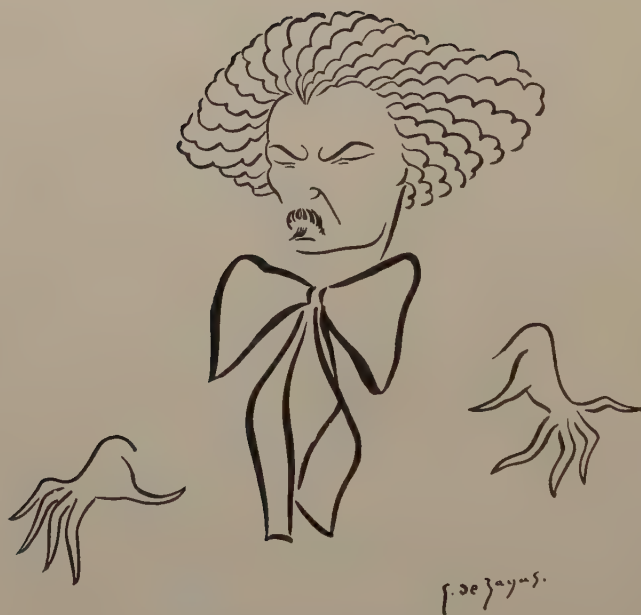
WHITE PAINT AND GOOD ORDER

part of it. So O'Keeffe. If a tree speaks or smiles, it is with all its body. So O'Keeffe whose paintings are but the leaves and flowers of herself. If a tree moves, you don't notice it. And when you find this woman moving through the wordy whirlwind that ever rages round the rooms of Alfred Stieglitz, you have the effect of silence.

This silence of hers, this deep peasant stuff of both her mind and body will explain why Georgia O'Keeffe is of so great a value in Babylonian New York. Neither in Texas nor in Wisconsin did they need her half so much as we. You know where to find the writings of our granite-marble city? In *The New Yorker*. Well, O'Keeffe's work is the script of the landside—of its loam and of its lowly hut.

Perhaps such script is Scripture. We'll let the critics decide. This much is sure: to see her is to be minded of some Scriptural wife tilling the soil and homing with her husband under the storms and sunbeams of Jehovah. And so to see her is to understand her, and to know her place in Manhattan.

IV
MELODY AND IRON



IGNACE PADEREWSKI

IV

MELODY AND IRON

PADEREWSKI plays a Polonaise of Chopin. He has been round the world, garnering glories. As Prime Minister of his newborn Poland, he has sat with the great, helping to place a dream upon the map of Europe. He is sixty-five years old and he is gray. There, in the darkened hall, are men and women—thousands of women. Their programs do not rustle. Their dainty hands lie tense in silken laps. When Paderewski stepped from the wings, they rose. And there was the hush of a profound acceptance. Paderewski plays a Polonaise of Chopin.

Chopin wrote sweet mellifluous rhymes: a minor song made intricate by subtle fingers. But Paderewski has been king in the great world. And here is Chopin, and there are ladies—substance and audience for Paderewski's greatness. The frail weave of a gentle poet is made to roll, to thunder: harmonies gossamer-fine are clashed to accolades: slim cadenzas coil into rumbling ruminance, burst into martial sallies. Chopin disappears, wistfully awry, upon the altar of Paderewski's greatness.

What is he thinking, as he sits and sends, for the thousandth time, his pæan—brilliant as an army with scimitars, sweet as the plaint of love—to the abject ladies in the Con-

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cert Hall? Does he enjoy this almost visible image of a conqueror's car crushing the bodies of his victims? Does he think of his music? Does he know Paderewski?

He is master of melody, and all his life is builded on a Discord. His will is great. But the world and the substance in which he chose to work did not measure with that will. In all his acts a dissonance is there. The will of the man becomes a frustrate spirit glowering on his work, torturing his music out of shape: his will, not realized in the act it takes, becomes the foe of its act.

Such discord, in such high terms, gives tragedy and gives that luminous aspect to the man which makes him at the very lowest the cynosure of all those smaller discords: the men and women of the world. Why was Paderewski born fifty years later than Liszt? Or rather, what flaw held him from seeing clear the fifty intervening years? Liszt, young in 1830, culled the ripe Romantic harvest, apace with Victor Hugo and with Schumann. Schumann was dead when Paderewski saw the light in the Poland of 1860. His first years were hard. Paderewski was no child prodigy. Rather than make a show of immature achievements, he knew starvation, he knew the wrack of want for those he loved and was powerless to help. A man approaching thirty rose at last from a life and from a land that knew defeat: and won Vienna, London, Paris. Defeat had made his will for triumph hard. Nietzsche was in the temper of this Pole, who with a piano conquered Europe in terms so clear that at once his name rose to a place above and distinct from the virtuosi of his time. Music was in his hands; but his mind spoke dominance. Nietzsche's superman loved Dionysian

MELODY AND IRON

music. Liszt, on the contrary, playing Liszt, became an abbé. Here was Paderewski, striking the note of Dionysius—and playing the music of Liszt! He failed to see the contradiction. The master must have a lash of leather, not of roses. Who deals in flowers should not dream of Cæsar.

Romantic, lordly, this man who looked his part, looked too much at his part—and not enough at Beethoven and Bach. Too swift and easy was the conjunction of his iron will with the sweet melodies of romance which (with the appetite for them) he found about him. He triumphed, of course. Any man, who with the eloquence of genius exhorts the public to what the public wants, is sure to triumph. And any man whose eloquence *is* genius is bound to be dissatisfied with such triumph. So, about 1900, Paderewski's name grew rare in the concert bills of Europe—although his legend waxed. It was known that he had retired with his wife, to devote himself to composition.

But discord cannot live in music. There it must be fused to the final unity of vision and of act. You cannot shut one part of your soul from your song, and make song truly great. Paderewski was confronted, once again, with the frustration that haunts him in success. Here was a man of heroic stamp. Nietzsche would have loved this stature of a tyrannos, his brow clear-deep, the mouth set tense and subtle. But what election did the hero make, making his music? He had conquered the concert halls of the world with the superlative playing of secondary songs. Giving his crowds with manly gesture feminine stuffs, he had not cheated them by half so much as he cheated himself. Here now, again, in his own music he had recourse to all the gilded

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idioms which the romantics, the epigones after Beethoven, had made so current and so easy! The greatness of Paderewski remained discarnate. He knew, alas! knew he was great, too well, to let his music humbly, falteringly aspire to knowledge.

Ten more years. There have been critics, of course, to heap superlatives upon the compositions of a superlative man. Henry Theophilus Finck of the *Evening Post* never tired in his asseveration that Paderewski was the greatest composer alive—except when it was to shift his comedy by cursing Brahms and the moderns, and putting Liszt with the highest of the immortals. But the song, itself, throve not. They who admired it were not the kind to hearten Paderewski. Perhaps he sensed, ere the intricate, well written work was off his table, how great the abyss between his sumptuous will and what he had achieved.

The War—and Poland! Paderewski shared the passionate patriotism of his people. About the Podalian cradle of the future master, the romantic warrior Kosciuzko was as urgent as the romantic Chopin. Here at last . . . perhaps . . . was the Way glorious enough to carry Paderewski's will. In those early days, ere America came in, one saw him of an afternoon, walking in Central Park. Already the millions of American Poles had made him their leader. He strode silent, between gesticulant friends. His hands were clasped behind his back. His hair was still the music lion's mane. Upon it, incongruous, was a derby hat. Why did the hat seem to mock the magnificent hair? What bitterness could lurk in this adventure, even if it failed?

It succeeded. As ever, the fates harmoniously worked to

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further an essential discord. Balfour sent Paderewski, via Danzig, to a Poland that clapped together in the unity of its acclaim. He was the greatest Pole; he was the leader. At Versailles, the Conference was his instrument. And with the help of his friends . . . Colonel House among them . . . he molded a living Poland out of dreams exiled till then in music.

Let it be put to his credit: he was a moderate among the nationalists. He dreamed of a nation. This dynastic creature which uprose in Warsaw was not his desire, and desired not him. The nation was there. Now, let the wolves run! The Polish Diet progressively cut down its margin of confidence, as its need grew less. Finally, it let Paderewski slide . . . graceful and erect . . . from the seat of State back to the stool of his piano. The superiority of the man over his fellows needs no better proof. If he was not a statesman in the creative sense, at least he was not a politician.

Paderewski's wealth was gone: but Poland was reborn. A Poland no better than her western sisters. By the high measure of the man himself, Paderewski failed again since the nation he helped create fell in at once with all the tedious, outworn, rotten politics of France and Britain. Paderewski's way, once more, had been an accepted way. Under the romanticism of his music hid weakness. Under the cover of his nationalist dream lurked conventional ideas, faded idealisms—and worked the old evils of political lust. . . .

Paderewski plays, after the high full years, a Polonaise of Chopin. Chopin is strained honey. Paderewski's fingers have become as steel. The will of the man has found a way

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at last. It turns the lyric hands of the pianist into iron. And the iron turns Chopin . . . and Beethoven and Schumann . . . into Paderewski.

Hear this *Valse*: how the man makes an engine for his passionate desire out of that timid butterfly of music. Hear this Beethoven: how Paderewski takes the humble master and refits him into Paderewski.

This gives you the man. Perhaps he was never genuinely great, because he knew not how to lose himself. To exalt Chopin to Paderewski: that was glory, perhaps. But to lose Paderewski in Bach was a height beyond him. All his triumphs are a masquerade: are Paderewski's will seeking an act to flesh it and never finding it, because no will can come to life that does not die.

If he had played so well the deeper, the less pyrotechnic masters: if he had composed his music out of the stammerings of his soul rather than with the glib regalias of the conventional masters: if, loving Poland, he had dared espouse the need of the Pole rather than the lust of a nation: dared to seek his aid from the true thinkers and lovers of mankind rather than from the stylish "great" who dined him in Washington and exploited him in Paris——

Paderewski plays a Polonaise of Chopin. A magnificent man sits at the piano, wrenching from sweet song a furious gamut that it does not hold. An imperious man bows low in the darkened hall, before the ecstatic ladies. Melody—as in no other of our age—at the behest of iron. Irony. . . .

V

JUSTICE PERSONIFIED



MAX STEUER

V

JUSTICE PERSONIFIED

HE must once have been a child. It is inconceivable that he was ever an innocent, ingenuous, helpless child. Surely, if he wanted something which his mother did not choose to give him, he neither wheedled nor wept: he cross-examined her. We know of the infant Mozarts who climbed up the clavier and played, when they were still too small to reach the keyboard on tiptoe. We know of the swaddled Mills and Macaulays parsing Greek at three. In some such similar way, Max Steuer was born a lawyer.

The bar is packed with brilliant counsel. As they manipulate the intricate creaking mechanism of a civil trial, we can observe the wherefore of their prowess. They have trained their voices and their manners; they have studied the virtue of casualness, the pitfall of impassioned partisanship, the eloquence of underemphasis. We can see them testing the jurors, pulping the witness, maneuvering the Justice. The law is a machine and they know how to run it.

With Steuer there is none of this; and the law, instead of a machine, becomes a drama. He is a spirit of the Court House. He is a satyr born to its dark corridors whose crowded life of personal desire never dispels its abiding air of inhumaneness. He is the genius of legal practice in an age whose law is Acquisition.

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So natural is his virtuosity that one wonders if he exists at all, outside the purlieus of the Brief. What have Europe and Israel to do with this embodied sharpness? Is not the old Tweed Court House his one fatherland? Is not Abbott's *Trial Evidence* his Torah? Are not the *Digests* his Talmud? Was he not weaned on precedents, rather than on milk? While his mates were playing hide-and-seek, was he not playing contracts? And did he not ride witnesses, when other lads rode hobby-horses?

The County Court House is a cold and shadowed pile: old without reverence, imposing without nobility. Those yellowing plaster walls, that moldering woodwork, the perennial attendants, yeomen of Tammany, who bring to the place the odor of stuffy flats over Second Avenue saloons and the sinister hierarchic incantations of the Gas House District, make of the Court a sort of Temple without a god—a Temple worshiping itself. Nor are the Judges priests. They are of two classes: the Justices who fit and who are not distinguishable from the Court attendants, and the Justices who remain outsiders. Either the spirit of old days in the Anawanda Club creaks heavily up to the judicial swivel chair as the clerk wheezes "Oyez! Oyez!"—or it is a perpetual stranger, clad in black robes, whom the Temple ironically suffers to go on dispensing the law.

The Court House is greater than its Judges, its lawyers, its appellants and respondents. But Steuer is neither less nor greater than the Court House. He is the very spirit of the place. It seems to have been built in order to express him.

When he tries a case, he is a rhythmic essential part of it.

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One thinks of a principal actor in a play, or of the conductor of a symphony, rather than of the usual clever New York counsel. The case lives in Steuer's head and he embodies it. His will becomes the symbol of its decision; not by virtue of Right, but by virtue of Substance.

He sits at the long table, a swarthy, ugly man, beside the attorney who has retained him as counsel for the defense. Probably he saw no paper of the litigation, ten days before. Exhibits, documents, briefs lie in huge piles about, almost blocking his vision (for he is short) of the Justice who is outside of all this intricate matter, but who, being a mere good lawyer, shows it.

Counsel for the plaintiff is examining his chief witness. Hour after hour, the ponderous unfolding of facts and figures rolls: the witness, prodded and slow, grinds out in words what must be the gist of those thousands of typed pages sleeping on counsel tables. The Justice stirs in his chair, shifting his legs, fighting the doze that weights his eyes. The jurors sink back, each into himself: they are twelve mutually repellent irking wills stuck arbitrarily into a box and straining off into a dozen absences. Steuer sits hunched; his nervous fingers subtly betray a semi-instinctive motion of the entire man, absorbing the witness, sifting and transposing a myriad of details. He is learning his case, while it is being tried. Which explains why his own conduct will be dynamic and organic. As the examination draws to an end, Steuer's position is more like a crouch. Until he is on his feet, tense yet controlled, and asking his first question.

Sleep is gone from the eyes of the Justice; the twelve jurors are one, and fixed on him. The dark court room is a

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sort of study in *chiaroscuro*, with Steuer the central light. He has become the ruthless will of his client, subduing by a sort of mastering rhythm the tangential and recalcitrant wills about him. He may be savage or subtle, passionate or suave, ingratiating or hostile. He has no rule for trial: each trial shapes him and he, in turn, leads it along to his issue. I have seen him charming enough to be approved by Joseph Choate. I have seen him lose his temper, when he adjudged that the effect would be good. I have seen him almost inarticulate with rage against his own client. He has been known deliberately to antagonize the Justice, to draw down upon himself threats of contempt proceedings. In one such case (a damage suit) the jury gave him a verdict so ridiculously high, that the Judge set it aside. He had overplayed his game.

Yet he is at his best, not when he is badgering some enormous magnate, not when he is piercing the defense of some woman with sword-thrusts scabbarded in velvet, but rather in some dry and intricate accounting case, a case in which figures procession through a hundred ledgers, a case with nothing but figures.

Steuer becomes a sort of worldly Pythagorean. He is master of numbers, although it is true that not beatitude but profit lies at the end of his dance. I recall a contract suit, relative to the building of one of the great bridges across the East River. The crux of the case was the establishment of a strict accounting of costs. For days, Steuer cross-examined the contractor from whom his client strove to recover millions. Before him the great ledgers lay, unopened. Above him sat the witness, a heavy man with quick

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and cunning eyes. And as the process grew, those eyes became dazed, became amazed, as if they were confronted by some apparition.

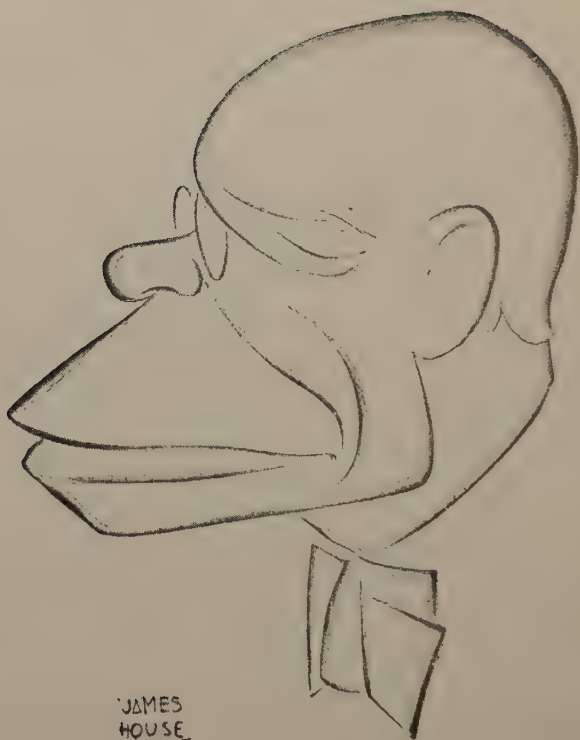
Steuer's spirit had become that Bridge. That is why, perhaps, he did not have to read the books before him. He was one with the vast steel structure, spanning the river. The numbers and kinds of rivets, the costs of screws, the stress of cables, the bulk of girders, the problems of wage-shifts and buying were material within him, as if he were the Bridge grown humanly conscious of all its elements.

But of course, if for a week that gigantic bridge—the drama of its plan and its construction—lodged in Steuer's brain, it lodged there with a bias. There is naught in this man of the virtue or of the justice of full knowledge. Nor is he essentially unvirtuous or unjust. He is the lawyer; he is the spirit of partisanship, ruthless, mechanical, passionately cold. And morality is quite outside the matter.

His secret is that he absorbs, intuitively, the *whole* of a case, and puts it to the service of a *side*. Most lawyers, retained by one side, express that side only; they battle on even terms with other counsel, expressing their side only. Steuer spans the whole—and *makes it smaller than the part*. In this lies his power. And in the spiritual limitation of this act he becomes a fitting symbol for the whole legal system, which ironically has the name of justice.

VI

PEASANT BY PARADOX



JAMES
HOUSE
JAN. 25

CARL SANDBURG

VI

PEASANT BY PARADOX

LUMBERLY and largely, with a peasant's mind, he moves through the Machine of our world. His life, his merit and his song reside in the great contrast between what he is and where he is, between what he does and what he thinks he's doing. He has made harmonious a bunch of alien elements which for most spell discord. That is the poetry of Sandburg.

It began already with his father who was a Swede and a peasant, and who turned the arm used to a plow, to the laying of iron rails. The American machine thus forced the peasant brawn to its own brash end. One could wax plaintive about that. Yet here is Sandburg, a whole race of Sandburgs, turning the American machine to the confident advantage of their own peasant innocence. The joke is on the Iron Beast. A primitive, prowling among dynamos; a singer reclining on a city lot full of ash-cans, as if it were a mead; a blower of delicate bubbles among incandescent lamps. Carl marks the balance—the shift, which may save us dwellers in a Machine. And he's as real, oh, quite as real, as his mangled brothers whose peasantry and song the Machine has perished.

When he was younger, he was known as Charles. There is a sheaf of verse, published in 1904 when the poet was

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twenty-six, signed Charles Sandburg. Carl is ashamed of it. He once commissioned a friend—this loyal, law-abiding citizen!—to swipe the copy that grimacingly persists in the Library of New York. For those were the days before he understood himself. Of course, he must be American—so let it be Charles. He was a soap-box socialist orator, he was secretary to the Mayor of Milwaukee, he was a cook and a roustabout and a rookie, seeing service in '98 in Porto Rico. And then, slowly to the peasant mind, came the good idea. To be American one must be not Peter but Pyotr: not Michael but Mischa: not Charles, but Carl! What's needed is a slant—what's needed is a note just off the line. He got the hang of himself, living in a world of rectangular towns; putting a curve to the town, putting a song to the whir of the machine. No wonder they came to love him in Chicago.

Slow and soft the word—in a shout-time of swiftness. Litheness and littleness—in an elevator age. A delicate finger laid upon a warehouse. He's a newspaperman, this poet: and even at his job, he earns his pay by paradox. He's so good a man for the news, because he's so bum a reporter. This long, slow, devil Swede—what could he sleuth out? No use hiding from him, no use closing up when he comes round. The stink of that perpetual stogie in his cheek would be enough to chloroform whatever wit he had. He's half asleep. And a good fellow, too. A friend. A lover of labor. Sure, Carl; come in, What'll ya have?

If he was sharper, this Sandburg, he'd get nowhere. If he was quicker, he'd get left. If he was brighter, he'd not

PEASANT BY PARADOX

be able to see—as he does see—in the dark. In the American Dark! Don't be fooled by Sandburg. This hard-guy, this mastiff-headed thrower of red guff and of Rabelaisian song, is really slight, is really shrewd, is really gentle. He's strong, because he's impermeable. He has survived, and they love him, because he remains a peasant in Chicago!

He pounds a machine in the Loop office of his paper. Then he puts on an old hat and lumbers out to Halsted Street. There's a saloon out there, where the Java he drinks all day and all night is extra good. It's a mile walk. It takes him an hour. Trucks and truckmen stop him. Union men, his chums. He squints a new skyscraper going up; and his eyes behold the gossamer grace of the girders. That takes a hell of a time. When the Java is in front of him, and his long legs sprawled, he puts a laborer's hand into his pocket and pulls out a bit of paper. On it are four lines (a week's work!). He's got the fifth line now—about the gossamer girders. A friend comes in. "*Do ye know,*" Carl leans mysteriously close, "do ye now just happen to know that there's more coal goes down the Chicago River in a week than up the Rhine in a month?"

He hands you statistics—industrial statistics—he hands you coal and iron and bricks and sweat: but delicately, lovingly, like his ancestor perhaps who whispered: "Flowers are peeping from the snow. I have seen violets at Enslof." His work in the Loop has no strict hours. Maybe he's gone to sing to ladies in Wisconsin. Maybe he's gone to criticize a movie, his solemn weak eyes squinting the celluloid, so sure that there is Greatness . . . American Greatness . . . underneath the flimsy. Or he's riding home in a Ford. He's

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at the wheel, proud and mystical. This ain't no machine, when Carl is in it. It's a symbol and a word. It's a song. It takes you to business and it takes you home. It carries your butter and eggs. It lifts your kids to your side. It sends trees, stars whizzing . . . "*I tell you, Ford is a great man. The Ford has increased the diameter of the average citizen's world 127 miles.*"

Sandburg lives in a suburb. A little house squatting beside other little houses. A radio. A stack of dailies. Java. Kids bumming on the floor. A Frau in the kitchen. Old folks round the corner. What the hell . . . who said this was an Industrial Age? Watch Carl amble in, a stogie to his cheek. (I think his wife takes off his hat for him, when they sit down to grub.) Watch Carl loaf through the night. By 5 A. M., lines six and seven have been added to the poem!

I know a chap, one of them wide-awake moderns, who spent a week with Sandburg at his house. He had dissipated in Paris, hit the limit in Budapest, explored the Kasbah of Algiers. But this week in Elmhurst, Illinois, just about did him up. Another cup of Java? Carl wouldn't let him sleep. Java and talk and eight lines to the poem. Why, brother, do you know there are 1,376 young girls at Marshall Field's? Working all day. All those warm breasts, all those eyes. Waiting on you. Serving you. Think of that! Lillian, more Java. Now this here Prohibition. It is good. D'ya get me? GOOD. We're taking to art, instead of to liquor. The movie, the tabloid paper—art, ain't they? Literature. Any page of an American daily's got as good writing as a Dickens novel. . . . That's why Sandburg does not need much sleep at night. He dreams

PEASANT BY PARADOX

the day: he's always half asleep, in the croon of his peasant song. But the other chap, *he* was done up.

Sandburg can bring a tender poesy to the "blues" which the singers of Tuskegee, which Paul Robson himself cannot beat. These dark men are getting too brainy and too conscious. I've heard them in Alabama. That intricate harmony—too mindful. And Robson's a giant. But Sandburg's a child—a great big child that does not sleep, that does not howl, that dreams and whispers his secret poesy into the facts and the machine of our world. Let him lecture to Women's Clubs. Let him write solemn serials for Pictorial Reviews. Let him spend five years writing the Epic of Lincoln. He's safe. Not because he's strong. Because he's permanent. And impermeable. There's loam under the factories. Loam everlasting. When you hear Sandburg singing, you know it.

Maybe the System crushed his Swedish father, turning the plow-hand into a layer of rails. Carl's got the System loco'ed, singing to it, crooning to it. Making it into a thousand little songs. Perhaps he is rather weak on critical brains. Perhaps he's sentimental about the American Nation. What of it? Delicate songs within the steel of Pork-town; exquisite songs within the Pork-town muck . . . *I saw a violet in the snows at Enslof.*

VII

ADVENTURESS WITH A DIFFERENCE



COVARRUBIAS

HELEN WESTLEY

VII

ADVENTURESS WITH A DIFFERENCE

THERE is splendor in this head. Beauty perhaps could not well weather the incessant storms of generous passion which her eyes invited and which her ironic mouth turned into banter. But splendor is the one word for Helen Westley: a splendor heroic and ribald, a splendor that is made of horseplay and suffering, guttersnipe expressiveness and Henry James seclusion, of Rabelais and the Saints: a splendor, indeed, much like the intricate splendor of our city.

She will come in on you, noisy with furs and clinking jewels, and her face stolid under frantic rouge. She will rattle her bag open ere the tall disarray of her body has settled at the table, and with talonous hand rummage a cigarette from the bag's mess of bills, cosmetics, letters, keys, ashes and bric-à-brac. She will thrust her voice strident-bright against the dull dark racket of the brokers in the café; and reveal in raillery the most recent prank of her too vagrant fortune.

But if, for a treacherous instant, you think of "gypsy," you are doubtless one who knows not the difference between red ink and Château Yquem; you have no ear for a language as delicately poised as the fine heavy head; you have no eye for eyes clear within this chaos of her smiles; you have no sense for a confusion made by the subtle power of this

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woman into an order plotting her whole life and making her life whole.

She is a goddess of our city. It is her due to lay complacent sables on her impudent shoulders: it is her due to string Broadway slang into the elegant syntax of Eighteenth-Century masters: it is her rôle to have classic features and to twist them into the leer of a Greenwich Village story.

She has emerged from our past and taken it along—all of its spice and spirit—to make our present and to make her own. Of course, she is an actress. Not a particularly good one. Acting on the stage is not her value and is not her art. Of course, she is a director of The Theater Guild; and I suppose she fulfills her executive duties if in no other way by keeping Philip Moeller perennially young and Lee Simonson perennially gloomy.

This, too, is but a pale shred of her value. She is, indeed, an entire epoch of our American adventure. That is her distinction. See Helen Westley well; and the mysterious migration fifteen years ago of the sons and daughters of the pioneers into the lodging-rooms of Greenwich Village, together with their emergence into the men and women who now strut as masters of the American artistic Scene, may be no less mysterious, indeed—but more familiar.

It all began, years back, in the bay window of a Brooklyn mansion. Helen's clan of prim old Huguenots are perhaps not keen enough to appreciate their famous daughter; so we omit the mention of Helen's maiden name. There, at all events, long years ago, she sits—a dark, imprisoned girl: surveying the gray bare Brooklyn streets and the plane trees in their iron boxes—waiting for adventure. It is

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Sunday afternoon. She has gone to church, and she believes in God. Presently, the right young men upon whom her clan has smiled, will call and smile upon her.

She is tall and her lean hands are idle. The cushions in her back are comfortable. But Helen's eyes go wandering through the window. And she knows already that neither the church nor the right young men whose talk is a pale continuance of sermons and of empty streets, will bring her what she longs for. A tiny legacy is left her. (For the dear child to spend on baubles.) Helen trudges across Brooklyn Bridge and spends her fortune at a school for acting.

No: this is not the certain homing instinct of the genius born for the stage. There is nothing so average in the universal tale of Helen Westley. She is looking for adventure. There is in her a mastering need: to plunge her high spirit, her delicate wit, her gracious manner into the turmoil and the swim of life. Instinctively, already, she is enamored of ironies and contrasts. That is why the fine-born girl, intelligent and poised, mingles with the frowsy candidates of Broadway: spends her little fortune on such a "bauble" to bring back at nights to her Brooklyn mansion.

And then, one evening, she does not return. From the Calvinistic storage warehouse of her parents, the girl has leaped into a fifth-rate road-show, perambulating storage of another sort to Midwestern hamlets. Her troupe travels by boat or by wagon: it makes the route of the Missouri River. And as the actors and actresses line up under the soiled eye of the Manager, this blooded girl is singled out—already—for the rôles of villianess and of adventuress. Already, there is in her eye a sardonic humor and on her

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mouth a comment of cold intelligence too hard for the ingénue or young première even of a yokel company.

What gleamed out and pierced even the obese wits of that barn-storming manager, the intellectuals of New York were later to behold and cherish in Helen Westley. For years, her one stage was the back-room cafés of Greenwich Village. Helen did everything sacred to the usual career of these lads and lasses, like herself rebels from proper Puritan homes. Yet Helen was different. They found that out. No challenge she did not fling herself to meet; no conspiracy for capturing heaven or hell, she was not primed for. But always, in the heat of her adventure, she was cool, intelligent; in the confusion, she was aloof.

It did not seem to get her much, however. She wandered, and often she was very, very "broke." There were times when her Nietzschean friends with correct ruthlessness advised her that her day was done and offered her pistol or poison for the dramatic exit. She moved through the murky chaos of Bohemia with a bright word for each trick of fortune and with a wink for the future. For *she knew*. What she had—what these others lacked and what no one of them suspected in her—was *religion*. What had pried her from the devout bay window and the Brooklyn church, had led her down the muddy western river, and had carried her with the saving zest of spiritual aloofness, into the eddies of lawless Greenwich Village was a devoutness—a religion of her own. This fading woman, whose caustic irony shone more bright as her eyes grew darker, had always had a sense that she must plunge, that she must lose herself, in order to ful-

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fill some destiny for which, even to-day, she has not found the word.

There was a night she considers crucial—a dark night of her life. Her window now was of no Brooklyn mansion, haughtily regarding the clean streets. It was the hole of a backyard wall; and into it came the wail of babies, the red weeping of women, the curses of baffled men. Delirious disorder beat upon the order of Helen's mind. She was caught in this murk and she was sinking with it. Was it for this she had left Brooklyn? "And then, there came the Voice!" She had but sensed it dimly in the cold silence of her Puritan home; now it rang clear in the clamor of this chaos. It told her to have faith, and to go on . . .

In the backroom of the bookshop of the Boni brothers down on Washington Square West, they were plotting to start a theater. Eddie Goodman, Lucy Huffaker, Phil Moeller, Ralph Roeder, Lawrence Langner, and a dozen others sat around and planned the Washington Square Players. Helen sauntered in, and no one ever thought of turning Helen out. It was not necessary. She would go in good time: go on to other adventures. But this night, Helen did not go. And it came to pass, that the founders of the Washington Square Players took her in and held her. She had something they needed: she *was* something they needed. A love of adventure, and a smile to salt it: a love of chaos, and a mind to right it—this in the flesh was Helen Westley. When the Washington Square Players modulated into the Guild, and the Band Box Theater east of Third Avenue was transfigured into the Guild Palace now west of

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Broadway, Helen went along, and became what doubtless to-day's aspirants of the footlights call a "power."

Rather is she a testimony and a symbol. Her true value and her art are her personal life. Her coat may be of fur and she may ride in taxis. But her words still coolly annotate, like castanets, the romantic dance of our age: her irony still barbs the surface of the success of her friends: her ordered madness, making of each hour of her days a little sacrament, justifies the too sane confusion of her fellows.

There has emerged with her the illusion of "old days" when the masters of the earth were foes, and the sky was the limit. The little rooms above stables full of dream and dust, the kitchen desks holding manuscripts whose lettered gold was invisible only to the *bourgeois*—that whole ridiculous and darling chaos of madness, poverty and revolution which sprang from the rigor of the Puritans, dwells still in Helen Westley. It is a presence in the perhaps too gleaming Directors' hall of the Guild—reminding them of what they might so easily forget: of their adventurous origin and of their adventurous purpose.

VIII

THE MAN WITH A PAST



THOMAS BEER

VIII

THE MAN WITH A PAST

WHEN he talks with you, he has a way of turning from you: his eyes glance sidewise: and although his words are most appositely for you, his attention close upon your mood, the man himself is remote from this perhaps too painful present. His adverse sociability—for he loves company—is a symbol of him. He, in his life, quick to the life about him, is yet turned away—turned back, in a sort of affectionate disgust, to his own past, and to the past of what surrounds him.

When he talks with you (never *to* you) you feel, if you knew him, that the fifteen years since college have not changed him. Then, as now, he was a boy in body as in mind. His plumpness had an ursine grace, as if this paddling walk across the Campus or across Broadway were just the thing to gain him secret access to some Reminiscence. A disdain was on his solemn face, from which the keen words shyly parted. His eyes had a brave cleanliness of distance. You felt that some betrayal had already made his thought heir to the anguish of disillusion. And there he stood, barbed and plagued by the experience to which he was devoted.

Such subtle suffering makes for fondness and far-sightedness. Pain, to be delicious, must not be too close. The accommodated eyes of Thomas Beer cannot, therefore, see near things without a blurring.

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Perhaps this is why he cannot work by daylight. This is not a matter for oculists. There is something in Tom Beer of the owl. By day, he blinks, half amused, half pained, at this vulgar saliency of shapes about him. With the night, his eyes find peace: that has come about the things of the world, which saves them. Can it be darkness? At all events, his wit takes wing; and his words are bright enough. Tom Beer's books are always done by the reminiscent glow of an oil lamp.

Of course, this day he cannot suffer is but a symbol of *to-day*: and the night he at least comparatively thrives in is the hiding-place of yesterdays. His body . . . if not his mind . . . is such a yesterday. He looks the dandy. He is neither new nor old: a subtle dust covers his youthfulness, making him different from all other dandies. You might imagine him in a drawing-room of the Age of Innocence: yet would you know that this soft hand and finely pointed foot, this curling mouth with its languid searching speech must, even there, be delightfully out of place. In his body linger archaic eighteenth-century tastes. He is no camper, no lover of Nature, no rhapsodist on ~~sunsets~~ or the sea. Doctor Samuel Johnson and Garrick would enjoy his enjoyments: but Wordsworth would have to hoof it alone. He is a lover of tea-cups and good wine. To see Tom Beer's nose wrinkle with distress as he whiffs the bootleg liquor of our day is indeed to doubt the whole myth of American progress.

His natural gaze has therefore come to be a reminiscent one. It is the world just over the horizon of his boyhood, from which he chooses to suffer. But if the physical eye is fixed in this commingled past of his own childish joys and

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miseries, the present man is with it: the present mind distils from the past he sees an irony perhaps more wholly of our day than that of any of his American writing fellows.

Here is the fused dichotomy or paradox which of Thomas Beer makes that most rare American consummation: a writer wholly individualized and wholly equipped for expression. His temper of to-day pastures in the rank fields of yesterday. This temper of to-day—bitter and smart—is the flower of those fields. Beer may not know that in his destructive modernness he is fulfilling what those rank fields called for. But the result is no less proper, for his deluded sense of an aloofness. Tom Beer is an excellent destroyer, because he is so attached to his victim. He is a razer of dead grasses. He is a burner of rotten vegetations.

To reconstruct our "past" has become a common enterprise in our contemporary letters. The American past is after all our body. If we would use it, we must know it. Mr. Van Wyck Brooks makes of it a moral weapon: and Mr. Carl Sandburg, in his *Lincoln*, made of it a prophetic vision. Such men conserve: seeing our accumulated life as a slough or peak, whence we should leap forward. But Tom Beer destroys. He would make of our past a "scratch" of death. More lyrically fecund than T. S. Eliot, he enthusiastically turns our yesterday into a wasteland. This, surely, is a better and more fruitful device than the weak wailing for past splendors from a present desert.

The Mauve Decade, his most recent volume, serves a pretty running fire on the scene of the American nineties. Featly, Beer sends bullets to pick off Bryan and Roosevelt and the Chicago Fair, and Frances Willard and all the ar-

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tists and all the rhetoricians of their day. From the mouth of fame, they drop into a laughable limbo where, perhaps, they are more safe from extinction than they were before. Tom Beer is too clever and too bored to fix any single target for more than a mere moment. At once, his eye wanders away. Also, he is—we suspect—too enthusiastic, too excited by this variety of “game” to study any of it ere he kills and passes. Like an ecstasied child whose Christmas floor is littered with too many toys, he flits from each to each—breaking as he goes. And so, the exquisite volume, with its pallid cover, hides a holocaust. Gods, customs, virtues, valors, scatter prone and done-for, upon the elegant carpet of this prose.

But the true confessional . . . and the finest work . . . of this pure young man with a past is *Sandoval*. It is the tale of the inarticulate love of two young brothers for each other. And the author has hidden his theme in an ironic picture, which would be brutal were it not so deft, of New York clumsily and affluently emerging from the Civil War. Like some treasure more pervasively aromatic than ambergris, the true kernel of the book pervades the whole. This counterpoint of a tender, personal affection and of an irony devoted to social retrospection, is Tom Beer himself. You may hear him by the hour divulge the follies of our nineteenth century: its night-clubs, its literary snobs who apotheosized the Music Hall, its strict analogies to our present ribaldries and splendors. But at the end you have, (besides of course, a lot of admirable information), chiefly the lingering perfume of a youth, somehow hurt, somehow romantically lost—of Thomas Beer himself.

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His ultimate trait is that of a tender boy. And his destructive words and books have an appeal profound beyond cleverness, and bitter-sweet, because it is a tender boy who does the destroying. The man is an atom of unattached affection, ironically attaching himself to a past he can jeer at and expose. He serves up a liquor of the obsolete, distilled with his own modish pain of it.

One feels him affectionately rebellious of the towers of our world. And if it is the huts of yesterday he levels, the reason is the man's shyness—and far-sightedness. He needs distance to aim well. For he is too sedulous an artist to attack what he has not first seen clearly; and too much the gentleman to make of his research a laborious vigil.

Therefore has this writer of good prose steeped himself in the bad prose of the nineteenth century: has this graceful youth absorbed the ungainly gestures of our past. He is a good omen—although he knows it not, nor cares. For his destructiveness upon the rank and rotted fields of yesterday helps make a clean, low, well-burned level for the new plowing and for the Seed of to-morrow.

IX
MADNESS AND MUSIC



ERNEST BLOCH

IX

MADNESS AND MUSIC

I REMEMBER, many years ago, showing a photograph to Sherwood Anderson. He studied a face with wide mouth, looming brow and eyes whose intelligence, irony and passion stared forward like two ramrods. "Why, the man's mad!" gasped the not-too-sane Mid-American. . . . The picture was of Ernest Bloch, of whom it may be said that if this be madness there is method in it—and the result is music.

Perhaps Anderson was merely on the trail of the truth: perhaps the gods who fashioned Bloch's career are mad, rather than Bloch himself. In the days before he had written *Jean-Christophe* and was merely the leading music critic of the world, Romain Rolland read the score of an unpublished symphony; and was so literally moved by it that he voyaged from Paris to Geneva to see the young Swiss who wrote it. Oddly enough, they directed Rolland from the *Gare* to a shop: a shop of the sort you know, which, on that first trip of yours, sold you an Alpenstock with chamois horn and a view of Mont Blanc and a *papier mâché* chalet. Rolland peered up at a dark crouched figure: a man with a pouched stomach and the head of a titan, who was perched beneath the ceiling. "So *you* are Bloch, the composer?" exclaimed Rolland. "Yes," replied Bloch and clambered down, looking like an intellectual gorilla. "And this is what you do?" "Not all the time," Bloch answered. "Ah," Rol-

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land was relieved. "Then most of your days, you *do* devote to your music?" "Oh, no," said Bloch. "When I'm not at the store, I'm lecturing at the University of Geneva." "Splendid!" cried Rolland. "On the history of music?" "No. On metaphysics."

Most of his life, all his life, Bloch has been doing "other" things—strange, often bitter things. And the result was music. Whether this deviousness of his way be a method of the gods or a madness of the man, you can decide for yourself. . . .

Early in 1917, he arrived in New York. Bloch had thought he was unknown here; so far as he was aware, none of his music had been played here. He was flattered, therefore, and amazed, by this gorgeous invitation to come to the rich land and lead a "symphony orchestra in conjunction with one of the world's greatest dancers," . . . and to name his own figure. Many nights, in his Genevan cottage, they argued on the extent of pay they dared ask of fabulous America. A cable replied to his stipulation, doubling the sum he had stated. So Bloch sold most of his household goods and decked himself in metropolitan splendor and bought a fur coat and with his wife and children abandoned the Alpenstocks and the lectures on Kant and Hegel—to find fortune in our country.

It was winter. The first evening, he sat entranced in the hotel lobby—so entranced by this new wondrous world, that a stranger walked off with his coat. The "symphony orchestra" turned out to be a band that dwindled from town to town: Bloch's job was to accompany an "aesthetic dancer" on the downward grade: the America he visited consisted

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chiefly of Bridgeport and Passaic: and the "princely salary" turned out to be a ghost which, like most ghosts, put in no appearance. So Bloch, a few weeks after his triumphant entry, was stranded and overcoatless in our winter city. He took a room in the 30's, west of Broadway. This treatment by America inspired him. Since the good news had come to him in Geneva, he had not written a note. Now, it was different. He adored America: he took out first citizen papers—and the result was music. With the Broadway cars jangling outside his window and a vaudeville singer overhead modulating "The Rosary" into sixteenth notes, Bloch finished a *Quattuor* whose final movement is a golden fusion of the color of the South Sea Isles and of the thunder of Alpine avalanches. The Flonzaley Quartette straightway played the work. And the musicians and patrons of our city suddenly discovered that one of the music masters of the age was in their midst.

Soon after, an entire concert of Bloch's work was given in Carnegie Hall. Bodansky conducted: leading artists from the Metropolitan and elsewhere volunteered their service. Bloch bought a new overcoat, and stopped composing. This was the spring of the year. By summer, Bloch was forgotten, again. He gave private lessons in composition, having found no orchestra to conduct and none to play him further. This return to normal fortune reestablished his faith in our America—and the result was music.

He has been with us ever since. For a while, he conducted a chorus in the basement of a Lexington Avenue school: a chorus which was to evoke the polyphonic works of Palestrina, Victoria, Orlando di Lasso. It met weekly. On the

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first evening, there were forty present to join their voices with the master's. In a month, there were ten. Finally, Bloch realized that he could not, *solo*, sing four-part fugues and motets. So he went home: and since there was nothing else to do—the result was music.

Cleveland about this time awoke to find that it was rich enough to become a music center. Bloch was imported to effect this. He became Director of the Institute. This man who by general critical consent bears a burden of creative power profound, shattering, almost unequaled in our day, proceeded to give his years to administrative duties. At times, he was so weary that he must go away for a brief rest: and the result was perhaps the *Viola Suite* or the *Quintette*. Once he stole a whole month among the Indians of New Mexico. Finally, social Cleveland became satisfied that it was musically on the map. So it let Bloch go. The town's money had never liked his mordant satire, his flaunting challenges to compromise, his scarcely courteous "seriousness" in music. So now, he is in San Francisco, directing the Conservatory there: suffering, struggling, antagonizing the ladies and making himself loved by the few true lovers of music: no longer young: tired and often bitter: and in climaxes of despair doubtless slamming his desk shut, taking a train to the Sierras—with the result of music. . . .

Reader: this is no sob-story, no recourse to the frowsy subject of how America treats her few great artists. To begin with, Europe did no better. And to end with, this agonized career of Ernest Bloch is integral of the man: is the method of *him*, rather than of his milieu. Without this constant alternance of high and low, hot and cold, from Geneva

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to Paris to New York to Cleveland to San Francisco—with the Marquesas still in the offing—there would be no Bloch at all.

The man's music is wrung, ever as the ultimate cry from his life. So perhaps unconsciously he makes of his life a crescendo of tangled adventures—that the result be music. This genius who ran a successful shop (for his mother), who lectured on philosophy, who built a great Institute on the rowdy shores of Lake Erie—who can do *anything*; could have been diplomatic, could have propitiated critics, could have found a score of patrons to support him, could have courted the stylish conductors, could have found for himself an orchestra to conduct—if deeply he had wished it. As a youth, he studied with Ysaye. “You will be a great violin virtuoso,” the Belgian told him. So Bloch put his fiddle aside. He was not looking for short-cuts to ease and fame. He wanted to live. He wanted no short-cut of any sort to music. Instinctively, he knew that his titanic song must rise from the trammels of a most human life: must be the illumination of a Dark in which his blood flowed fully. The result has been his forty prisoned years: and such moments of liberated splendor as his *Schelomo*, his *Psalms*, his *Poèmes Juifs*, his *Suites* and his *Quartet*.

He is a man so intense that when he holds you in his gaze, you will do well to relax and simply let him talk. He talks brilliantly. This music man knows literature, epistemology, politics and life. But he talks incessantly (except when he is in the woods where he turns sweet and silent). If you do not relax before his words, he will wear you out: the black magic of his eyes will make a rag of your nerves. There he

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sits, crouched and gesticulant, before you. The years have worn him lean; the hair is sparse on his head: the gray face folds into ironic mimicries as he strips persons, sentiments, ideas of their warm glamour. This mind is ruthlessly in love with truth when it is hard to bear. The ardor of the prophets has turned to satire: and yet, there tingles somehow in his bitterness a lusty joy far closer to Rabelais than to Jeremiah.

Bloch knows the House of the World. He has explored it all: its palace chambers and its sewers; its sunrooms, its pantries, its plumbing. He is perched high on it, a sublimated gargoyle: dark, passionately concerned, yet ever out of place—laughing at the pompous marbles, weeping at the hidden, humble corners. And the result is music.

X

FUNNY-LEGS



MASSAGUER
M C M X X V

CHARLES CHAPLIN

X

FUNNY-LEGS

THIS fragile little man who has shaken the wide world with laughter looks at himself and feels he is a greater joke—a less merry and more wistful—than any he has concocted. There was, for instance, a certain night in Paris. That town's leading theatrical producer, aware no doubt that there was nothing on the stage worth showing, took Charlie to the Cirque Médrano. When Chaplin, flanked by his friends, slipped into his seat in the first ringside row, the brothers Fratellini were cavorting in the sawdust. They held the funnel-shaped house focused on themselves. It was hard to say if any one had remarked Chaplin's entrance.

But the finish of the Fratellini act was the signal for intermission. The high-tiered human monster, suddenly shouting *Charlot!* with a thousand throats, avalanched down upon a single spot at the arena rail, where a little man in a dapper dinner coat sat blinking. He was engulfed, and lost. A score of gendarmes broke into the delirious maze of men and women, pressing on Chaplin as if they were hungry to devour him. The police found him, formed a phalanx about him and he was shuttled out into the Place Pigalle.

But the cry *Charlot!* had got there first. The square, the boulevards that lead to it, turned into a magnetized mob;

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thousands came pouring, pushing, shouting. Men touched him; women tried to kiss him. At last, with his London-tailored garments reduced to the state of a rummage sale in the Bronx, Charlie was swept into a strategic taxi. And as the car maneuvered him into a side street and the voice of Paris shouting *Charlot!* dimmed, he shook himself; he smoothed his hat; and he said:

"It's all—*nothing!* It's all—a *joke!* It can all be *explained*, I tell you. It's all—*nothing.*"

But this was no Olympian above the mob and the battle. Chaplin knows "it" is not nothing. But—what is "it"? Chaplin knows "it" can be explained—but who to explain it? Such questions as these have grayed the hair of this most beloved man of all the world—who is thirty-seven years old. Take "it" away, for instance—this magical popularity; dim it even for an hour, and Charlie's latent melancholy flames into hysteric rage. I recall a breakfast, one morning after a night of talk, in a small "box" of Greenwich Village. The waiters and the early guests did not recognize Charlie Chaplin. He was fretful, and then furious.

"I'm going home," he said.

"Do you want a taxi?"

"One taxi? Call me twelve! I'll go home in twelve taxis. The first I'll ride in. The others will be my escort."

And then he laughed at himself. When he got home, doubtless he fell asleep. For he'd been up all night, this popular god of the films, talking Schopenhauer and Spinoza. When he awoke that evening in time for dinner, having broken ten engagements in the way of his sleep, the first question in his mind may well have been: "What does *it*

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all mean? Why has this thing just happened to me—to Charles Spencer Chaplin? *What is it?*”

He thinks of the days not so long ago, when he was a \$25 importation of Mack Sennett. He saw “it” coming on him, as he ate his chile con carne with the other hams in the Los Angeles lunch wagons. Eyes dwelt on him as he entered, hard with inquiry, glazed with an acceptance of apartness. Silence grew manifest in groups as he passed. “*They have been talking about me!*” At last he heard: the reports were coming in, from Everett, Washington; from Shreveport, Louisiana; from Mitchell, Indiana; from Bradentown, Florida; from Penobscot, Maine. “Send us another picture with that there Funny-legs. When Funny-legs—what the hell is his name?—is in the comedy, there’s a crowd and a glad hand.”

From a thousand silent towns, a misty murmur gathered and moved upon the studio city. Until there it was, in the handshake of managers, in the proffered palms of producers, holding contracts for many dollars—and for many years. The Whitechapel lad who had been a dud, singing in the music halls of England, and who knew the smell of sordid lodging-rooms from Brummagem to Montmartre, shook his head, and refused to sign.

“I don’t know,” he said. “I may retire. I may study Sanskrit. I have always been interested in Sanskrit, you know.”

Was that fear—was that despair in the managerial eye?

“What is it?” he asked himself. “I must look out. There’s something *they* don’t even understand.”

He has not yet found out. And this is the pity of Chap-

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lin. The gods seem to be playing a sort of serial joke on him. And he's always behind: he's never yet caught up. The mob . . . the fortune . . . the fame . . . the intellectuals of New York and Paris turning his stunts into logarithmic mazes as if he were Einstein . . . the great of the earth . . . mysterious, hungry women. What sort of a game is this, anyway? Why do the rotten-teethed thousands of London weep and bash their fists in their faces when he comes to town? Why do the Frenchmen speak of Pan and Dionysius—and give him decorations?

"I'll find out," says Chaplin. He has not found out. But he has become a self-doubting, melancholy, haunted man—oscillant between gayety and despair.

"I thought I knew what I was doing. I studied hard the technique of laughter-getting. I know now I never knew what I did. Really, I must start to learn the art of the motion picture. I must start. . . ."

But in the meanwhile (and here's the pity), he must go on. He is caught in a vast machine which he has created and which he does not run. How can you go on, and start, at the same time?

A man with eyes met Charlie for the first time some years ago. They went to the Beaux Arts for lunch. Both of them were busy men and had a day studded with dates. They forgot. They talked, they walked, they dined, they went on talking. Finally, they breakfasted together. Here is the way the man with eyes saw Chaplin:

"The man I lunched with was the traditional comedian, shrewd and dapper. Later in the park, he was a boy—sentimental, vaguely mystical. As we walked sordid streets,

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he was an ironist. He was hard and ruthless. At that moment, I began to love him. I realized that he was above the common run of pity. Later when he spoke of his childhood, I knew that he was capable of compassion—a strong compassion, analytically grained. We sat in the shielded glow of a single lamp whose shadows were thick on walls of books; and I found a gentleman beside me, a strict conservator of the high place in the world that was his own. The critic disappeared by midnight; there was a gamin; there was a madman. A deep sensualist emerged, sadistic, yet possessed of a cruel love of checking himself back into intelligence. At 3 A. M. he was a wistful, bewildered lad of the East End. If words of the Kabala had come from his hard mouth, I should not have wondered. He seemed a Jew. And then a young emperor with bacchic vine-leaves in his tumbled hair. . . . He was never a fool. . . .”

Charlie Chaplin's secret is that he has created for himself a mask in which all this gamut lives. What a strange mask it is: a bit of a mustache, a bit of a cane, baggy trousers, flapping shoes. Yet it has satisfied the world, from China to Paris. It has failed in but a single way—a cruel one: for it has failed to satisfy its maker.

It has plunged him into a world of wonder: a world of almost grandiose elements which he confronts with his sweet childish question. It has given him no answer.

He seeks his answer wistfully. There are women, for instance. Charlie is tender and innately fine with women. This explanation of *what he is*—will not some woman give it with her love? It is a fact that more than one girl, who has taken from this bewildered boy the dross of his gold, had

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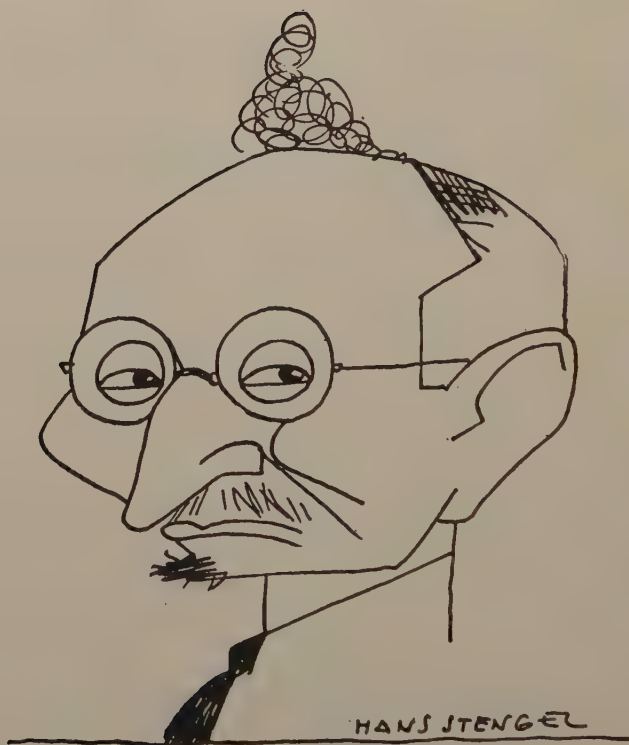
she had it in her, might have given him to himself. . . . If not woman, perhaps the intellectuals can prove him to himself? Once he voyaged all the way to England to find out from H. G. Wells. Charlie's quests equilibrate each other; and leave him as will-less as a Russian romantic in the quicksands of Los Angeles: lost in a world of which he is the king, and which he does not love and which distrusts him, knowing him different from it.

He goes on seeking. And his quest slows his work, sicklies the pure lyrism of his art with a pale cast of thought.

Cream tarts do not fly so swift from a meditative hand; nor a body dart so agile from the pursuing officer, when the mind within is on another hunt.

Is it all a mirage—this power and this fame of Charlie Chaplin? Will there be naught at the end, but the unceasing pain of the unceasing question?

XI
JOYFUL WISDOM



DR. ABRAHAM ARDEN BRILL

XI

JOYFUL WISDOM

IF you saw him in the street, with his springy step and his eyes twinkling, you might say: "What a delightful world this most delightful little man must live in!" And when you learned that it was Doctor Brill who dwells in a world of madmen and neurotics, you might say: "What an impervious little man to be able to live in so agonized a world and keep his heart free!" . . . And you'd be wrong, again.

"I'm at home," Doctor Brill once told a friend, "in an Insane Asylum." There's a bit of a clue. Once upon a time, Scott Nearing and Clarence Darrow debated the question: "Is Humanity Worth Saving?" And Nearing, who thought so, looked cadaverous and gloomy, whereas the misanthropic Darrow, arguing gustily, Nay, was having a whale of a time and by the looks of him had ever managed to have one. There, by analogy, is one clue more. If you have ever met Doctor Brill at dinner and watched his face light up with jocund deviltry as some slip of a tongue gave him a clue to the particularly dark and ominous secret of your soul, you'll be quite on the way to illumination.

The man is jovial because he is having a good time. And he is having a good time because he basks in the fever of heart-break, because he loves the webs and labyrinths of errant souls, because he is a fisher in troubled waters. Mind

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you, there is naught sinister about this. Quite the contrary. What would the ill and the miserable do if healthy Wisdom held itself aloof? If Abraham Arden Brill is in his element among traumas, paranoias and neuroses, let the sick be glad. The man's wisdom would not be half so therapeutic, if it were not joyous.

His career is a corollary of that of Sigmund Freud. Not so much more than twenty years ago a young medic, born like Freud in Austria but settled in our country, came to the master who was already grizzled and morose with the war he was waging almost alone against the savage inertia of the scientific world. "Give me the rights to translate your works in English," asked the young Brill. Freud looked about him with his tragic eyes. In Vienna, they seemed more likely to stone than to read him. A wall high as traditional Heaven barred psychoanalysis from other lands. "*My books in English?*" he said. "Oh, yes, you may have the *rights*."

So Doctor Brill returned to the land which, all unconscious, craved his new creed: the enthusiastic land, the psychopathic land—the Neurotic States. It is true that he spoke our language poorly; but he was in tune with our nature. We were ripe for his peculiar brand of wisdom. And we were eager for the gusto—for the gaming spirit—in which he set forth to give it.

Doctor Brill forged ahead. He worked in the Asylum of Central Islip. He lectured at New York University. He made cures—and converts—in the clinics of Columbia and of the Post Graduate Medical School. He never stopped smiling. In particular he smiled when for a moment he turned from his work to lend ear to the horrific sounds that

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the name Freud called forth from leading alienists. In 1909, he had Englished—in a style not radically worse than the usual jargon of our scientific journals—Freud's *Selected Papers on Hysteria*. A year later, came the epoch-making *Three Contributions to a Sexual Theory*.

The Old Guard in Psychiatry stood on their hind legs and howled. Medical journals printed pages of almost inarticulate abuse. This was the reception by scholars of psychoanalysis. But Brill, with a few others, went on working, and Brill, above the others, went on smiling. A popular magazine published his articles. He wrote a book on the subject which sold like a novel. The Freud translations came, year by year. Brill's English often sounded like the muddled ravings of dementia præcox. It did not matter. Freud was destined to be king in our city. Brill was his viceroy. And the day did not tarry when all eyes which had ever peered through horn-rimmed glasses searching for the Truth were glued to these pale gray tomes of Freud and Brill—and finding it!

America proceeded to go mad—that tiny section of America, of course, which had brains enough. (For it requires some intellect to become insane.) Psychoanalysis! Who that lived them can forget those days in which the souls of our American youth flowed without benefit of liquor? Not then, as now in our prohibition era, did men and girls gather about the hip flask. All they needed was water, to wet their lips parched with too long talking. They met in club, in salon, in bed—and “psyched” each other. They discussed. Above all, they confessed. Women roamed about, dreams gushing from their unrouged lips. Young girls

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wore passionate avowals like posies in their hair, like lurid gems on their breasts. Strong men, inspired by Dream-interpretation, abandoned wife and career, seeking the Mate of a Complex. Plays, poems, novels, critiques lifted into glamorous light all the dark ways of our souls. And schools sprang up—and philosophies—and religions. For the slow-evolving Europeans, there had been the Age of Darwin: for ourselves this Psychoanalytic Age, a saturnalia of sex talk.

In the early days when women had leered at him through their lorgnettes as if he were a satyr, our Doctor Brill had had a good time, keeping sane. Now that they rushed at him as if he were Priest and Prophet, he kept sane, too—and had a good time. He rode the mad wave with his head cool and his eyes twinkling. He tried to calm it. But he could not resist the common jollity, since it was after all but a vulgar exaggeration of his own.

This was not at all what he had wanted. He considered himself a skeptic, a lover of the Fact. Psychoanalysis had won him so warmly, because it pricked old bubbles, because it made mincemeat of traditional ideals. It was great fun to prove the carnality of your roseate dream. It was sport to say of the Monotheism of the Jews that it sprang from an Only Son Complex. These were the *facts* of course: but what a game to show it—to “spill the beans.” That was why he’d brought Freud to America. And here was our dear country up to its old tricks and turning Freud into a new rapt image to be worshiped! Brill looked about him with amaze. A hundred Pauls and Johns were preaching a new Word to a hundred cities. The complex was the Grail. The dream was the Evangel. The unconscious was the New

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Jerusalem. The Cross turned phallic once again, with our enthusiasts rushing to be crucified upon it.

This would never, never do! Brill set his fact-loving gayety against the hosts of analysts who made up for their lack of medical training by an almost priestly zeal. He would have no Canticle made of the confession; he would not permit a new technique of psychological research to be turned into a revamped Dionysian rite. He was quite sure that he was matter-of-fact; that he hated generalizations; that he saw through most idealisms. His aseptic and healing principle was Reason.

Of course, the joke was on him. For his sanity was not so far from the madness of these religion-makers as he thought. True, his temperament is a personified reaction from the musty mysticisms of the eighteenth-century ghetto, traces of which doubtless still lingered in his childhood town. The old gods and the old idealisms needed to be scrapped. Brill enjoyed the job, and did the job so well, because he brought to it the same prophetic love and moral zeal with which his forbears smashed the idols of an older age. Once it had been Jehovah to be fought for: now it was the Father-complex. Once it had been the Kabala, now it was the Unconscious. Once it had been the symbolatries of the Bible: now it was the symbols of the dream. And the difference between them no true difference at all. . . .

And now you see why Brill took so heartily to the work of Freud: and why America, religion-loving land, welcomed him so hotly. For Freud is a great maker of symbols. The old ones were wearing out. Yet the old hunger remained; and unless the old hunger got new symbols to feed on, the

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result was Neurosis. So Freud had his new revelations: he called them Causes, he called them Motivations. They are as inscrutable as the old revelations of his ancestor, Ezekiel, who saw, you will remember, angels with wings and feet the color of brass. But they are *up-to-date*—acceptable to the new scientific mode of satisfying the old human hunger. Wherefore A. A. Brill heard and was converted.

No wonder his eyes have a jovial dance. No wonder he Anglicized the name of Freud and called his daughter Joya.

XII

POOR LITTLE RICH BOY



HENDRIK WILLEM VAN LOON

XII

POOR LITTLE RICH BOY

ONCE upon a time (*i. e.*, 1882) there was born a man child in Holland, upon whom all the stars showered their gifts and blessings. You know what Holland is. A stodgy place, respectable, prosperous, self-loving. The home in which this boy was dropped by the stork in charge of the Rotterdam Division, was proper, sleek and satisfied even for Holland. A noble family were the Van Loons: and now, the constellations had decided, catastrophically, to endow their son with tempers and desires not known in the good Lowlands since the days when the Dutch admirals licked the British. . . .

“He will be clever and quick,” said one star, beaming that night on Holland. “He will have many talents—for words, for songs, for colors,” twinkled a planet. “His mind will run through accepted laws and customs nimbly like a rapier,” spoke a constellation. “He will have a hand to turn to any trade and master it. He will have an eye to find gold, an ear to catch laughter, in all the world’s muck-heaps. He will have legs to wander far. He will have a heart to hold friends . . .” chorused a galaxy.

Then the moon dawned, dimming the stars. “Oh, ho!” said the moon. “This is too much. Measure, my friends! Are you all mad, making this trouble in Holland? I can’t

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undo the extravagance of you fellows. The word of a star, like its light, can't be recalled. But I'll balance it. He shall be always out of place: he shall be always a boy, tender and savagely egotistic. He shall be always miserable."

Outwardly, Hendrik Willem grew up to be a Dutchman. That is, he waxed large and fat: his cheeks were as a tun of Schnapps: his eyes popped down on lower mortals with prosperous forbearance: his hands hung like Schinkens at his side: his mighty feet flapped as with wooden shoes upon the pavement. But within—within was still the little boy, the bright little boy, the gifted little boy: tender and savagely egotistic. For the moon was working, too. Here was this great Holland body of Van Loon, chock full of powers and as well chock full of pains.

This world of the Netherlands and the Van Loons, so snug for a Dutchman, was soon a straitjacket for Hendrik. His talents champed and his ambitions stifled. His eyes began to roam, to vault the dikes of his dear, flat country. This is how History came to call him. History meant an escape from the snug, snug land of his birth.

See him, now, westward bound. He is a tall youth. He speaks French, German, Spanish, English. He is looking for adventure. A soft silk muffler swathes his aristocratic throat from the democratic winds of the west. That silken muffler is a symbol. Watch it. He is ready to brave the blasts of radicalism, journalism, war and fame. But he will always be careful to keep a muffler of silk round his aristocratic throat.

To be literal, for a while: Hendrik went to Harvard (aged 20). Then to Cornell. Then he married, most gen-

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teelly in Back Bay. He returned to Europe for a Ph.D. He became a historian and a correspondent. His first book was published, in dove-blue covers, by Houghton Mifflin of Boston. It was about the Fall of the Dutch Republic. It contained most respectable maps. And its opening words were these: "In December of the Year of Our Lord, 1794 . . ." But the War found him at the Front, and the Kaiser hastened him to the Left by kicking him out of Belgium for his liberal ideas. A U-boat blew him into the sea on his way to America. He decided to be liberal in college, rather than in the War-zone. But Cornell, after inviting him to tell aspirant engineers about modern Europe, kicked him likewise out for a like liberalism. 1917 found him large and plaintive in the purlieus of radical New York: and the moon very much in the ascendant.

He scribbled satiric essays and scrawled satiric pictures: his history-sharpened fingers pricked, ever so deftly, the Bubbles of Progress. For a while, he conducted the New York branch of a Dutch export house: and this, too, he did very well, till the U-boats blew the business into the sea. Margaret Naumburg gave him a job, teaching history to very small boys and girls at the Walden School. Twice a week, he loomed in the classroom, making historical pictures with chalk or with matches dipped into colored ink—pictures of the comedy of Europe, of the quaint parade of empires and rebellions and dreams. He was like an intellectual barrel full of gay surprises, above the bright heads of the children. He was a boy, himself: a mastodonic lad, somehow endowed with facts. Too much of a boy to con-

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vince the others with words. So more and more he drew pictures in the classroom: less and less, used words.

These were the days when you could see him lunching at the Harvard Club: his table symbolically poised between that of Colonel Roosevelt on the right and of Jack Reed (red hot from Russia) on the left. Roosevelt and Reed both eloquent on the Rights of man, and Van Loon reticently remindful of man's plights. He was poor: the U-boats had smashed his health. He was separated from his children whom he loved with a hurting passion. He was miserable. The moon was very, very busy.

One day, he dined with Margaret Naumburg and a man. He dumped on the table an unkempt manuscript, half text, half match-pictures. They told the story of mankind. Never had the ribald tale been made so gay and sad, so colorful and quiet. Wherefore, twenty-three publishers who had seen them had refused to take them. "You can have them," said Hendrik to his friends. "And if you find a publisher for them, you can spend the royalties for cigarettes and hairpins. . . ."

You know what happened. The mess of manuscripts was tidied into shape. And the pied pictures of Events and the cool, quick tale became the book which made Van Loon famous unto the Borneos, and wealthy. This was the year 1921. Academies, newspapers, libraries, magazines, cabarets and colleges cried Hendrik welcome. Movie-actresses asked the "professor" to autograph their copies of his books. Gold medals were pinned on his ample Teutonic bosom. Vast-paying women's journals bought his stories, and lean radical weeklies printed his cartoons. Did this

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mean that he was happy? It meant that the moon was at the zenith: that Hendrik Willem had time, at last, and means to be miserable to the extent of his great powers.

The trick of gentle humor masking tears, of satire earnestly sustained against a despair which, otherwise, would burst into unseemly shouts or shrieks—the saving grace, in other words, which he has brought to his histories of men, he should apply to himself. For his own tale, too, is ironic and sadly splendid. His eminence is a joke on his frail soul, even as his big body is a joke on his frail health. He is an aristocrat and scholar, who has spent his life in the scrimmage of mobs, of wars, of newspapers. He is a believer in Caste, who has aimed his skill at Caste's destruction. He is a plaintive wooer of song, who has written very sharp history indeed. He is a lover of lush, rich things—books, pictures, women, wines, *bonne chère*. And his svelte, astringent prose has been an eraser of all the dear old rhetorics of man. He has never had enough—could never conceivably have enough—of intimate, maternal, tender caresses. And he marches through a rather gigantesque fame which neither soothes nor touches him: so that, deeply, he is unaware of its existence and is forever rather pathetically striving to prove its existence to his own heart's satisfaction.

See him surrounded at some lunch club by his pals—wisecracking prima donnas of the Press. His smile is a mask like his dry words—both cracked a bit, so that the man's discomfort does appear. He is forever out of place. This is why he is forever amusing folks, seeking folks, scribbling for them little pictures on menu, on card, on book.

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Out of the prairie-dimension of his waistcoat he pulls a tiny silver case. Snuff-box? It ought to be, for this Dutchman enjoys snuff. But it's a paint box, specially made: the smallest complete water-color set in one of the largest waistcoats in New York. The contradiction is Van Loon. He is as delicate as that silver case. And by means of it (and of its like in paint and word) he has made his protecting fame—which always just fails to protect him.

You remember Montaigne at his natural, lordly ease in his castle of Montaigne near Bordeaux: Montaigne within his tapestried tower, fended by many servants, coddled by wines and women, at work on his *Essays*, after a thrilling youth. This is, perhaps, what Hendrik should possess. His house is charming: but it is surrounded by the democratic vulgarities and rocks of a Connecticut village—it is surrounded by America and the modern world! And the "radical" historian, Van Loon, is at heart as mediæval as the Holland burghers, from whom he revolted, are modern. This mediæval splendor of the mind is what you find in the tiny Castle of Van Loon. You forget the stone fence, you forget the yapping Fords outside. In this miniature illusion of ease, of caste, of intellectual play, you catch the true reality of the man. He may write of Tolerance, but what he needs is a château high on the rock of feudal privilege. He may pen onslaughts against priesthoods and oligarchies. But what he really means is that the priests have been fools and the kings scoundrels: otherwise, they would not, by misdeed and mistake, have compelled a lord like himself to go slumming through a world he was born to master.

XIII

ONE HUNDRED PER CENT AMERICAN



HORACE B. LIVERIGHT

XIII

ONE HUNDRED PER CENT AMERICAN

“WHAT!” we hear them shout: Ku Klux Klans, Security Leagues, Vice Societies—all the Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Cherubs, Thrones of the American Heaven. “WHAT! *this man?* . . . During the War, he brought out the best revolutionary and pacifistic books that he could muster. He has sponsored half the advanced novelists who pollute our homes, half the radical thinkers who defile our customs, half the free verse poets who corrupt our English. He has defiantly come out for minorities in a land where the Majority is sacred. He has fought such noble democratic measures as Censorship, as Clean Book Bills—and with his own money! money doubtless ill-begot through the sale of works by renegades like Debs and Dreiser. He stands, first and last, for the Revolt of our misled youth against every proper tradition of the land. You can’t go into his Office without encountering some socialist, some prophet or some radical university professor. He has popularized Petronius, Nietzsche, Moore! He has been indicted by the State of New York for a subversive publication. And you entitle a sketch of him *100 per cent American!* . . . Sir, how dare you?”

Well, gently now, my gentle lords and masters. Let us see. . . .

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His name is Horace B. Liveright, and he comes from Philadelphia. That ox-like and memorial metropolis some years ago suffered an earthquake: a quiet earthquake which made the statue of William Penn on Broad Street quaintly waltz, but did no damage. Some say indeed it was not an earthquake but a tremor of relief. And it occurred when HBL raced with his seven bags full of schemes down the deserted platform, and swung on the last step of the train which brought him to New York.

In those pioneer days our hero was a trader. You could see him in the purlieu of Wall Street: stalwart, svelte and scintillant, dark withal and dashing—and on his brow already the shadow of some doubt. Indeed, the gesture of romance with which his grizzling hair swept upward seemed to express a yearning beyond Curbs and advertising columns. A good trader, nonetheless: he sat at the wheel of his Fiat; money ran through his nervous, nonchalant fingers; the gilded pageantry of Broadway knew him and drank with him on easy terms. But, were you keen, you could see even then a discrepant glance in his nostalgic eyes. This man was looking away—toward the makers of history and of books. He was in a hurry—always in a hurry. But not, like the other traders, to get the pot of gold at the *bottom* of the rainbow. *He* was running to *vault*.

The key to the secret lay in his desk at home. There, under a chaos of check books and *billets doux* hid bits of manuscript—songs, dialogues, themes: humble and too scattered to raise their heads. The way was yet long and devious for this Lothario of traders. He grew more scarce in the canyons and cafés of Broadway. He became a manu-

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facturer—of paper! And at last, his face was known in the dark basements and back rooms of Greenwich Village: he became a denizen of those untidy incubators of American Culture—of the American Soul!

HBL, Publisher—Put him down a product of that American ferment: of that already distant and romantic age in which our country, cut off momentarily from its European outlets, began to sizzle and stew in its own juice; in which theaters, books and magazines of verse rose like an enzymed scum to the surface of our life; and countless youths, perched on the garret-tops of Greenwich Village, found voice and shouted: "Hail, Nietzsche; Hail, Ibsen; Hail, Dos-tóievski—we are come!"

The rest is literary history—or will be. And this scion of our Age of Ferment belongs to it. No record of it can be complete, that fails to reckon with HBL . . . erratic, tangential, generous, inspired . . . this trader in Letters, this gambler in æsthetics, this marketer of poets, this poet of marketeers.

Romance in Business harks back to another well-known Philadelphian, Ben Franklin. The Crusade in Business is a corollary clause whose most eloquent propounder used to be a motor mechanic in Detroit. In both these American inventions the stress is after all still *business*. HBL typifies a change: the injecting of business *into* romance and crusading. His means is negotiable coin and the ways thereof: but his end is Idea and Dream. Possibly, in the days when Liveright (with Albert Boni) first began to print Nietzsche in cheap form and to hunt for American masters, he understood that in our practical American world

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the artist was the unfortunate lover destined to become a hero: the Idea was the inaccessible Grail destined to be sought for. You see the difference. Long the accouterments of poetry had been exploited for the ends of prose. Here was a man doing the converse: a sort of Parsifal, riding around in a Ford.

For the sword he buckled on is Commerce; and the steed he rides is called Publicity. He looks businesslike enough. And his tools are mighty sharp. But if you think that his end is the same as his means, you don't know where he's riding.

There is, for instance . . . as a hint . . . his Office. Rightly, it is a brownstone house which, from its origin, was destined for a *home*. A home it is still, although the typewriters click and the basements bulge with books. It has a warm, convivial atmosphere. To visit it is no short matter. For everybody that works there is the friend of everybody else. And if you have business with HBL, the whole blessed family knows it—and is concerned—and is full of personal pleasant questions. There is perhaps too little outward discipline in this place. It is, indeed, an unconscious organism—running itself.

The head of it works like the proverbial heart—wherein his weakness doubtless, *and* his strength. To the achieved author, no human being is so troublesome as the would-be author. Liveright is a vicarious author. By self-analysis and a true humility before the creative act, he has seemingly excised the personal from his literary will. And yet there remains in him enough of the immediate thrill of writing to bring him naturally close, and to make him helpful,

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to the writer. But HBL knows less of books than of men. When he discovers a writer of books who *is* a man, he is likely to take the manuscripts on faith. This is why his list of Americans is better than of Europeans. He has met the Americans. Of course, in both men and books, like every intuitive spirit, he makes gigantic errors. And the reason for this is that there are in him two instincts stronger than the constant quixotism which makes him back the Idea in a world of Fact: the instinct to gamble for the sake of the game, and the instinct to help for the fun of helping.

HBL has a weakness for the under dog. It is a fortunate fact that in literature so often the under dog of to-day is the lion of to-morrow. But if one of Liveright's pets stays under dog, he does not repine. He even enjoys it. This trader is restlessly moved by a need of virtue: and doubtless the presence of a few magnificent failures on his ledgers helps.

But when the book is ready, the trader is doubled by a circus barker. HBL can sponsor a book like a lover of the Truth, and sell it like a patent medicine hawker. He has done more to put "life" into the literary market than any of his fellows. And . . . more's the pity . . . he is proud of it. For this "life" consists chiefly in undifferentiate adjectives of praise, lacking even the circus merit of alliteration. Of course, in this, Liveright is a child of the times. The complexity of reaching the scattered literate thousands, hidden in our hundred millions, is exasperating enough to make any one raise his voice. The trouble is that straightway the other publishers raised their voices too. So that the "Book Page" has become a Bedlam—as noisy as the old

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Curb with which HBL used to be familiar. Even Paris is beginning to imitate the cacophonous ways of Liveright. He knows it's bad: but he enjoys the racket—precisely because he started it.

Recently this dramatic fellow is flirting with the theater. He put on a *Hamlet* in modern clothes which was unique, not in the presence of pistols, telephones and dinner-coats (they'd done this in London) but for a deeper reason. The hero of the Liveright show was neither the Dane nor the Bard, but Horace Liveright. This was not his conscious doing. He did not know it, himself. He simply couldn't help it. The words were Shakespeare's, the act was Basil Sydney's, the stage was James Light's. But the nervous, pelting, hectic, breathless lyric lilt of the thing was HBL. The wonder is that he did not go into the theater long ago. The theater will feed the weaknesses of Liveright: his love of gambling, of display, of power. This will merely make him feel at home. The theater may stimulate his virtues. For HBL enters this new arena with all the old mixed motives of his cunning senses and of his hungry spirit.

If he is a crusader, if he is a romantic champion of good books—if in his business career the desire to serve, the motive of ultimate conscience can often be discerned, there is something even back of that. Good books rather than bad ones; good writers rather than dull ones; good causes rather than respectable ones—by all means! For that is the way to a Good Time. This man is no reformer. He is closer to the poets. He does what he likes. And this he likes above all: that no hour be heavy, that no day and no deal be without its radiant wings. There is here much of the gambler,

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much of the showman, a great deal of the playboy—all good American traits. But what galvanizes these into the peculiar person is their direction toward creative, rather than possessive ends. HBL has made a shrewd discovery; that the race is no longer to the commercial, and that the joy of living has left the realms of materialistic Fact for the domains of poesy and fancy.

All these contradictory elements in HBL: the gamut indeed from stocks and bonds to Dream. And not integrated yet, any more than they are integrated in American culture. But look at them whole, and you'll find they have the *American direction*. That percentage of visionary and ideal hunger running through the rest of him and pointing all of him—shall we say it completes the American 100 per cent? Well—let us hope so.

XIV

THE MAN WHO MADE US
WHAT WE ARE



JOHN DEWEY

XIV

THE MAN WHO MADE US WHAT WE ARE

You have probably heard of him—vaguely. You have probably read some of his essays, and not quite gathered what they were about. You have probably sometime taken a course in Philosophy, Education, Culture, Psychology—and opened one of his books—and felt your brain grow maggoty after sixteen pages. No matter. You have certainly never seen his name in the headlines, nor his face in the pictorials. No matter, again. He has influenced *you*. He is the most influential American alive.

For instance: You read the *World*? John Dewey has formed the pages of its editorial prima donnas. You subscribe to the *New Republic*? The gods who rule it have been ruled by Dewey. You send your child to a progressive school? John Dewey inspired it and is Gospel to its teachers. You think Senator Borah an improvement over Senator Mark Hanna? The difference is John Dewey. You persist bravely in looking on our land as “an experiment in Democracy”? You cast your ballot for some politician with “workable ideas”? You believe in the values of “trial and error”? in the relative truths of all religions? in the pragmatic uses of art? You trust in Progress and in Science . . . You may not know it, but John Dewey is the living man that made you.

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In the flesh he is humble enough. He is tall, awkward, atrociously groomed, exquisitely bashful. The gray head, for all its intellectual force, has a lamblike look which at times becomes sheepish. The deliberate humility of his words is Christian—far more Christian, indeed, although the words play havoc with Christian revelation, than the puffed forwardness of Gospel preachers.

And here is your threshold to the man. Ruthless follower of intellect and science, whithersoever they lead him, at heart he is a Christian and a poet: a Christian who will accept no written gospel; a poet who trusts himself to write only on politics and metaphysics. Perhaps it is the conflict brought upon his brooding spirit by this romantic loyalty to the Mind, which makes him walk slow-stooped, as if his head were just a bit too heavy to be borne; which makes him look at you, shyly, as if this fact of sight were just a bit too intricate to think of; which makes him speak so non-committally and soft, as if he knew that words were the real form of thinking—and thinking a thing so sacred that he must be careful!

He has been slow and careful. He was born in Burlington, Vermont, in 1859. You are aware, of course, that Burlington and Montpelier are to the Brahmins of New England what Tibet is to the Buddhists. They are the high, cold pinnacles of Culture. And Boston and Brookline are beneath them. The only lapse from proper form, for instance, in the known history of Montpelier is the sad case of one George Dewey (a collateral cousin), who as a boy ran away to sea and became an Admiral. To be born in

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one of these chaste citadels of virtue is to partake of an inherited grace.

Which may explain a great deal of John Dewey's evident sense of guilt in being a great thinker; and why he was all of forty before he at last revealed his wicked ways to the world and forced on his academic fellows the henceforth unavoidable shame of his original, revolutionary mind.

The year was 1899 and the book was *School and Society*. It looms to-day as the outset of an era in education which pervades not America alone—all of America which his stirred in the least from the "little red schoolhouse"—but also half of Europe. Since its publication, John Dewey's decline from Burlington standards has been both complete and swift.

Of course, he was not alone in the task of freeing the American mind from mediæval forms and giving it attitudes with some relation to the world we live in. Calling him, and valiant at his side, was his senior, William James. James was of a New York family; and pure Vermont expects corruption from such sources. But here was Dewey lending logic and method to the heresy which menaced not alone the country schoolhouse, but the church—and made nonsense of most of the great American orations, including those of Daniel Webster and Patrick Henry! Dewey in the name of Pragmatism radiated forth. Croly, Kallen, Lippmann, Robinson, Van Loon; LaFollette, Eastman, Baker, Howe, John Haynes Holmes, Rabbi Wise, Clarence Darrow—such, with scores of others, are the men who have colored the very action of our world with the thought of this man who wan-

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ders through it, lost as a poet, modest as a saint, wistful as an adolescent.

And out of touch, personally at least, with the very men and women whose lives and thought he has most immediately affected. Do not picture Professor Dewey ruling the roost in the schools and colleges and editorial sancta of the nation. He has not been in most of them. When he does meet the men who would be glad to call him master, he is mostly silent, never self-assertive. He has modeled these active minds through the sheer force of his books. At the very heart of him is the refusal to exert his personal will upon his pupils, even upon his children.

He has a farm in an unfashionable pocket of Long Island. He retreats there from time to time (when some mission has not sent him to Europe or to China); and he does chores. He squats on the back porch at twilight, and cleans the chimney of the parlor lamp. There is a smudge of lamp-black on his nose. He works carefully, and almost solemnly.

When the gong calls for supper, he takes his silent seat and silently, carefully, he chews what his wife has put on his plate. Then, surrounded perhaps by a good quota of his grown-up family, he slumps in a rocker and listens to the talk. He listens for hours, without a single word. It is hard to say if he is thinking; if he is enjoying himself. Perhaps, most essentially, he is *accepting*. There is the crux of the man, and of his work. He *accepts*. He has found life often cruel, often miserable. But his instinct drives him to accept. So he has elaborated an immensity of reasons why he should accept. He is not so far from his Puritan Christian ancestors, after all.

THE MAN WHO MADE US

This acceptance by John Dewey of the world we live in is not passive: it is aggressive: it is a striding, pioneering act like his ancestors' acceptance of the America they had not yet uncovered. Despite his good-sized family and his professorial pay, John Dewey years ago adopted a boy. Now, he was a very busy man and he feared he might not give sufficient attention to this new responsibility he had assumed. So he ordered that the boy's cot be placed in his own bedroom. He forced himself to keep the lad in mind. This is his way of acceptance.

He has a horror of emotional expression, equaled only by his respect for all men and women who express their emotions. *His* poems are unpublished; yet his driest work is builded on a mystic faith. And the faith he takes care to bury in intricate, methodological detail. Acceptance, again. If he had revolted deeply from the world, he would have been a lyric poet. John Dewey lives on beauty—on faith in beauty. If he had been able to find his beauty to-day in to-day's world, he would have been a great religious poet. But he could neither entirely rebel, nor utterly accept. So he swung his acceptance into the future: and having done so, he found he could accept the evil present as the logical Cause of the good to-morrows. "The world *is*," he told himself; "noisy, stupid, ugly—yet it *is*. Now find a reason for it." He turned his lyric energy into logical search. And he found his reasons. Pragmatic reasons. What he set up indeed was a Golden Calf called Progress. It justified for him the machines that racked him, the stupidities that flayed him.

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He is the true son of his fathers who preached humility and acceptance. *They* were humble before a theologic Dogma: they accepted a straight and narrow moral Creed. And Dogma and Creed have crumbled. In their place, our chaos of the machine and human impulse. But in John Dewey, the ancestral fervor to accept. He applied it to the disorder which he found, even as had his fathers to *their* inherited order. And the romantic mood in which, from Maine to Texas, the American accepts his industrial Gehenna—thinking it somehow good—springs in large measure from this quiet man, of whom most Americans have never heard.

When the War loomed on us, John Dewey was tense with resistance. He almost showed his emotions! He hated the whole business in Europe: he prayed America might stay clear of it. He even wrote an admirable paper in a (soon suppressed) radical monthly, telling why America *should* stay clear of it. And then America went in. Here was the War, with its hysterias, its falsehoods, its sanctified blood lusts—and none more alive to them than Dewey. *But here it was.* So Dewey must accept it. He proceeded to write articles of another kind: soberly, subtly rationalizing War.

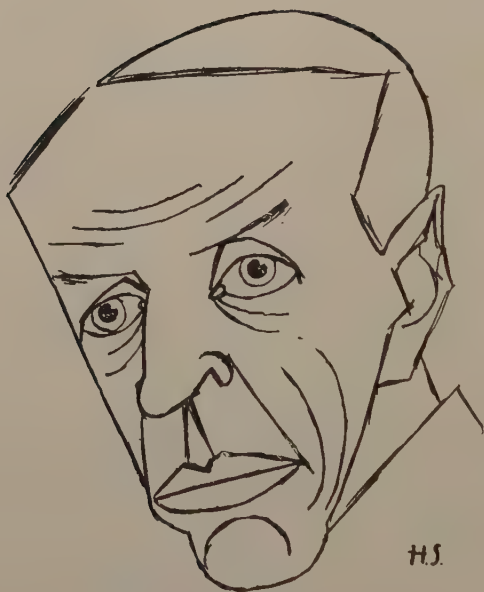
He is one of the greatest of Americans. If there were not so many blatant instruments of publicity about, America might know it. The America of to-morrow will know it, even though it rejects his dangerous rationalizations—rejects the unreal magic which he calls Progress, and which has power only over the unreal future.

THE MAN WHO MADE US

Timidly, he walks through the mangle of skyscrapers and foundries—bravely. Extracting from the iron and the rust a prophetic glow: from the racket, a Word. Deep down he is probably right. For his recognition of America's promised grandeur is his recognition of himself.

XV

IN AMERICA'S IMAGE



SINCLAIR LEWIS

XV

IN AMERICA'S IMAGE

ONCE upon a time, America created a man-child in her own image. He was very tall and his hair was sandy. His liquid eyes had a perpetual stare which put them out of focus and made it necessary for him to peer into the world through big bone glasses. His voice was loud and seldom silent. His silences were moody, heavy like unspent clouds. He was generous, sentimental; quick in response to laughter and to tears. He was more vivid with nerves than with energy which for the most part was deprived of happy things to do. He was a level-headed, clever fellow with a long hunger for madness and a contempt for smartness. His feet were firm on the ground; but his eyes roamed the clouds. He was full of logic and full of disgust for logic. He was playful and miserable; arrogant and humble. He was the son of his Mother.

America gave him a high-sounding name, to befit one fashioned in her image. But the name did not go with the long nervous body, with the freckled homely face. His friends called him "Red" after his simmering hair. Or called him "Hal"—which scarcely fit him, if Hal suggests *hale* to you, or *whole*. For this man-child of America was

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altogether like his mother: hungry, restless, yearning in some unuttered way to do, to create, to serve.

He was put to work after the usual national fashion. He went to college. He vagabonded a bit. He took on the burden of a family, when he was not smart enough yet to bear the burden of himself. He got up at five in the morning, and wrote 100 per cent American tales for 100 per cent American magazines. And then he took a train from his 100 per cent suburban home, and slaved the rest of the day for publishers of 100 per cent American books.

He did not have a very good time. He despised his own stories. He despised his job. He got drunk on words, or on liquor; and that helped. He looked at his Mother America; he looked at himself. He saw a strong family resemblance. He did not like what he saw. In fact, what he saw filled him with despair. And his despair distilled a drop of prophetic determination. He wanted to do, to create, to serve.

The red on top of his head got to be the symbol of "Hal" Lewis. He was getting hot . . . slaving, slaving: he was getting mad . . . having to do what he did, to make his Mother America support him. He came to be in a perpetual simmer of rage. His eyes popped, his mouth gave forth voluble objurgations, his hands twitched helplessly. The most articulate thing about him was the simmer-red of his hair.

And getting madder, he got wistful, too. He had friends who wrote books. He worshiped them. He worshiped everything that struck him as different from America or from himself. He named his son after a then unpopular

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Englishman named Wells. Whenever he wrote a novel that failed to run . . . as they all failed . . . through a meager first edition, he dedicated it to half the authors whom he knew and whose work, in a humble, arrogant American way, he worshiped.

He was having at last, not a poor time, but a very hell of a time. You see, he had been fashioned in the image of America. And there's a strange thing about America. She is passionately in love with herself, and is ashamed of herself. Mystically sure that she is the greatest thing on earth, she gives her open admiration only to what is far away or what is patently mediocre. She is arrogant—and obsequious; cocksure—and faltering; boastful—and dumb. Above all, she is adventurous—and afraid. She looked at this plodding, simmering son of hers; and did not care for him at all. She treated him rough. She lavished her literary favors (like him, again) on fourth-rate realists from England whose shoddy wares struck her as elegant and fantastic.

Now, deep in her heart America had a secret. It was this: Loving herself, loving the face and body of herself, loving every vulgar ludicrous detail of her unstoried life, she was ashamed to admit this. She was ashamed to admit this even to herself, or to express her love in any open way. And what she wanted was a way whereby she could love herself, and yet *seem* to be doing just the opposite. America, if you will, was a coquettish auto-erotic child. Some subtle sense of better things barred her from flagrant flaunting of her self-adoration: but in no way destroyed her hidden passion to caress her own junk-pile towns, her

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junk-pile business men, her blatant morals and her strident arts.

Here was a dilemma. Could not herself be served up to America in such a way that she could love herself—and save her shame? Sinclair Lewis, true son of his Mother, was destined to solve it.

They had all failed before him—with the brief exception of Mark Twain. Dreiser had served the reality so bare that of course America blushed and turned away. Whitman had openly crowed over this face and this body! He had not bargained with America's need to be ashamed of herself. He had cried out against all shame; in favor of all nakedness. And the other artists, for the most part, had simply lied. They had served up pictures, rancid, sweetish, transforming America into what she was not. All very well, that, since America was ashamed of what she was. But since she was in love with what she was ashamed of? . . .

Sinclair Lewis, heaven-sent, solved the mighty problem; gave to his Mother herself in a form which she could relish unblushingly at last! He was simmering mad. He hated his Main Street. He'd show up Main Street. Show it up, serve it up piping hot with his own American rage. Behold, he'd done it! America wanted her Main Street. And the rage in which it came clad by Sinclair Lewis saved her Puritan shame. Taking the anger along, she could revel at last in this body of herself.

So hot and succulent in satiric wrath, *Main Street* was absorbed in countless editions by the narcissistic hunger of America. Hal Lewis, suddenly famous and enriched, after

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his long siding upon Grub Street, was worried. What did *this* mean? When he stroked America, she'd left him alone. When he got mad and spanked her, she adored him. He had a glimmer of the truth. He did not like what he saw.

So he got still madder. The result was *Babbitt*. The satire was stronger. Babbitt himself, however, and his gang were still recognizable features of America's self-worshiped body. So America took *Babbitt*, clad for shame's sweet sake in satiric rage, to her auto-erotic bosom. Less passionately, however, than she had taken *Main Street*.

Hal Lewis grew more independent. Like any young animal who feels his oats, he took to scampering round; he tried to forget his leading strings. He lived in Europe. He hobnobbed with all the inferior celebrities of England, and in true American fashion, gave them his worship. He tried to forget that he was the image of his Mother. He wrote *Arrowsmith*. Here the satire, the independent creative gesture, became dangerously stronger. America still found bits of herself to caress and embrace. But this dressing up of her sweet body in the clothes of wrath must not go too far!

"No?" says Hal Lewis. "Well, I'll live my own life!"

If he does, he'll have to live it on the income of what he earned living the life and perverse will of his Mother.

For this is the secret of his success. To America, Puritan, moralizing, fiercely auto-erotic, he gave herself to worship in a guise she could accept. The love of self-identification informs his portraits of American dullness. And the lyrism of external denunciation makes them acceptable to American dullards who, shamefacedly aware of themselves,

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are yet in love with themselves. And makes them acceptable to all the world!

If he should ever write a book in which his poetic attitude, instead of merely clothing his prosy vision inspires a luminous vision of its own, America will turn from him with indifference and anger. He will become what in his heart he hungers to be: an unpopular author.

Of late, he has revealed rather pathetically this secret in his heart. He pulls a watch in a Kansas City pulpit and gives God five minutes to strike him dead. Does he want to win the atheists? does he want publicity? I doubt it. He wants to be hated a bit—even if his hunger makes him vulgar. And he'd only be too glad to believe in God, if God would only hate him enough to fell him. Poor inarticulate Hal! Later, having failed to get a rise from God, he turns down Pulitzer's proffered \$1,000 prize for *Arrowsmith*. Is he trying to be smart, notorious again? I am certain not. Nor is he a bit concerned in the menace of money rewards for books. He is concerned with himself. He is positively disgusted that a book of his should win an academic medal. He is furiously anxious to appear what he dreams to be. He will prove to the world he is not a popular author, not an Academician, not a winner of proper prizes: and that he *is* a pariah among other pariahs (*read*: a man of genius among other men of genius). Positively, he is unsure that he is like the men he respects. At least negatively, he can approach them by refusing the honors *they* never get a chance to accept.

It is his cruel fate to be the adored son of his Mother. It is his dream to be free of her. Let us hope the dream

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may never overtake him. Hal Lewis is so generous a symbol of our land; of its realism, romantic and rebellious; of its sensuality, crusading and ascetic. May America long continue to keep him mad, in order that he may go on giving her what she loves.

XVI

RARE AS MUSIC



LEO ORNSTEIN

XVI

RARE AS MUSIC

THERE had been the usual parade of proper pupils playing Brahms and Chopin. Two lads in velvet blouses went through a Bach for two pianos, nimbly and sweetly. And the audience, gentlemen in frock, ladies in pearls and hats, sat in the sun of Bertha Fiering Tapper's music-room and clapped wan hands. Some one said: "Leo is here, Ornstein is back from Europe. Won't he play?" A boy elf-short and clumsy with the fair clumsiness of an untamed cub, shuffled forward to the revolving stool whose shiny prim mechanics seemed ridiculous beneath him. He hung his long head. His hands, large, ivory-colored, lay on the keyboard like an incantation. His body hunched. Suddenly he straightened; his head rose proudly and his hands drew a strange music upward.

He played Debussy and the guests nodded in boredom. He played Schoenberg and they stirred with irritated courtesy as if they were waiting a bit too long for the music to begin . . . "Won't you play some of your own works, Lec?" . . . The boy made no sign. He had taken no notice of his audience. But his body tensed. The head seemed clouded in a new resolve. The hands grew enormous—exquisite and enormous—as they clutched the piano, as

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they wrung from it the mad, full, wailing iron of his *Notre Dame*.

Men snickered, women writhed. Men drummed with foot and cane on the outraged carpet. A woman screamed; a woman got up, tipping a camp-stool. The proper gathering sat naked, under their clothes, bursting their politeness; and the boy played on, giving them no notice. His face plunged deep into his frangent song; or lifted high above it. He played. At last, he ceased. The hands lingered on the keyboard, like plastic reverberations of the music they had broken from it. The body collapsed: he became once more the untamed, hunched, and clumsy child, shuffling afraid from the room.

So, in the Fall of 1914, did the real Ornstein come upon New York. Antediluvian Age: when Strauss was still a modern, when Schoenberg was a name, when Stravinsky was the echo of a horror just come about in Paris! Ornstein had come before; ten years before, when his family, implicated in the Russian revolution of 1905, fled house and fortune in the Ukraine. They found the customary gray rooms and black bread in our East Side ghetto and Leo's father became the Cantor of some cellar synagogue. The boy, not yet ten, had already studied in St. Petersburg with Rimsky and Glazounov as his masters. He was not long in the Attorney Street squalor, before his luminous talent made him heard again: and Mrs. Tapper, luminous too in her way, made him her pupil and—at the end—her own. In 1913, Ornstein returned to Europe to tour. England, Norway, Paris heard him—and heard the new strident song which suddenly had burst from the boy, theretofore

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docile enough to the idioms of Rimsky and Tchaikowsky. In London, while the crowd hooted, Mahler had come to his rescue. At the Sorbonne, the great Calvocoressi had invited him to play and to explain himself. But New York had listened to him only as the common prodigy performing Rubinstein. This sunny Saturday afternoon revealed him.

And of course, among the snickering, the outraged, the half-hysterical, there had been the inevitable one or two or three who waited for him in the hall and threw their arms about him: who went away with a glad tiding and a new song in their hearts.

He was a flame then, a bright flame, barely sheathed in the frail scabbard of his body. A ghetto body, lean and gray and small. A head luminously sharp. The mouth of a Greek mask. Eyes darkling brown like pools in a brambled wood. The voice came pelting, boyish, limitlessly glad. The narrow brow shut in some splendor that seemed to hurt, that seemed to harry him. Yet it pealed forth, and as it came, it rent him. To see him was to know what genius meant. . . . And he is flame to-day: dark flame, now: flame more rigorously sheathed and slow, in a body studiously strengthened. The fire and spirit are *formed*. The voice is less pelting glad. He has become the man whom the boy proclaimed.

But the man's birth has been dolorous. Those first years, when he was not yet twenty, his fortune seemed immediate and assured. New York rushed him with its usual inept whole-heartedness, the like of which in Europe would mean at least a decade of acceptance, whereas, with us, it means at most a season's vogue. He gave a series of talk-recitals

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at the residence of Claire Raphael Reis: this won him the "inner group." Followed the concerts at the little "Band Box" in Fifty-seventh Street East, where the Washington Square Players had just begun the *cursus honorum* which was to land them in their gilded theater. (The Band Box Theater prospered, too: and has become a Bank with grand new marble front.) But Ornstein's course has been a different one. He played only the moderns. He gave, unostentatiously, Ravel, Skriábin, Bartok, Albéniz; he gave Ornstein. "I am not a virtuoso," he explained. "I am a maker of music. These are my comrades in a new adventure. You know our masters, as well as I do. Plenty of pianists give you them. Let me help my new friends, by helping you to know them."

In New York at first, when it was new, it "went." There were articles about Ornstein; he was painted and sculpted; there was a book about him. At length, there was a manager to "take him up"; and the long, dolorous journey into manhood had begun.

In the Provinces they did not care for Schoenberg; they adored Liszt. They could not stand Ornstein; they doted on Chopin. The boy had to live: not alone he—his family as well, for the old Cantor's voice had faded. So Leo Ornstein stepped into the Machine; and the Machine squeezed him. There was juice in him, despite his marvelous leanness. Oh, yes. Else the high-class manager would not have appreciated him, you may be sure. When he was dry like a wrung lemon, he could always be cast off. There's always a fresh crop of geniuses from Russia.

This Machine that took him consists of Pullman berths,

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Statler hotels, press agents, interviews, society ladies of "forty" with a thirst for "twenty," flappers sipping thrills, and programs full of rhapsodies, gimcrack and gymnastics. It is the Machine of virtuosi. It is only dimly related to music. To the Song and the Word of God, it is not related at all. It is far closer in spirit to a stylish motor-works or to a modish tailor's. This is all very well, if you happen to be an Elman or a Moiseiwitsch: a nimble, clever acrobat swinging to other people's music. But if you're the Music, yourself: if you're the sort of creature in whom the subtlest tremors of the air turn into blasts of body-wracking song—well, you'd do better to make your song in a coal mine, in the whirl of a sweatshop, than try to keep it living in this cold, cynical, lecherous, sterile, sterilizing world of the American Concert.

The frail boy wavered. The usual quota of "friends"—among them a critic or two who, properly prompted, had hailed him—prepared to bury him with flowers. "A victim." There was reason for the shallow. He resented the masters (whose vogue kept him from his true work) and he played them, at times, with a heart-rending bitterness of beauty; but in another mood, he massacred Chopin and Beethoven. His own music paled and took a wistful even imitative tone. "Bury him with flowers." How can an Ornstein compete with a Godowski or a Hofmann, and not fade as Ornstein?

So the boy died in the Machine, and the man was born. He had had the wisdom to marry a true musician (*read*: naught of the virtuoso)—Pauline Mallet-Prévost, like himself a former pupil of Mrs. Tapper who had died not too

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early to see Ornstein's struggle but too soon to see if he emerged. They got them a house in the aromatic mountains of New Hampshire. And the rite began in which was sacrificed the circus-performer, the Pullman-jumper, the darling of thrilled ladies—in which was produced the scarce known Ornstein of to-day. Ornstein chopped wood for his fire and his wife left her music to cook. He shoveled snow. He did not coddle his fingers. He had always loved red meat, good beer, a rank pipe. Now, he had them. And he composed dark, heady, restrained and integrated works which he left in the dust on the piano and which Pauline had to ferret out and copy. (Why publish? Where's the hurry?)

Half a mile up from the house and wholly hid in a wilderness of mountain, he has his work-shop. It's an unpainted shack, built by himself. On the piano, a tangle of music paper, a few good books (this music man knows books), a bunch of dirty pipes, a stove and a great pile of logs. He goes down to the city as briefly as he may: teaches with his wife in Philadelphia or plays some worthwhile score with a respectable orchestra. Then back once more to the unpainted shack. And from time to time, the "music-lovers," fresh from some latest exhibit at Aeolian Hall, grow reminiscent: "Ornstein? What has become of Ornstein?" They see the old boy in his velvet coat with his wild head hid in a mysterious rapture. (But the new man has muscle, and gets along with his neighbors who are New England farmers.) They hear the old music—angry, unleashed, a sort of bounding challenge. (But the new music seems to reach, for its ideal, to Silence.)

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Retirement and Silence. Rare goal for a musician who could bring the house down playing his *Wild Man's Dance* till the blood of his knuckles stained the ivory keyboard. But then, what is so rare in this grand Music World of ours—as music?

XVII

MYSTERY IN A SACK SUIT



A. R. ORAGE

XVII

MYSTERY IN A SACK SUIT

WITH a bird's-eye view of our City, you will have noticed for the past two years growing numbers of little knots of people scattered about town in comfortable places—very intent, largely silent. Closer, you observed that these groups consisted of editors, wives of Wall Street, professors, novelists, shingled girls, restless business men, artistic youths. Here were true intellectuals who despise Greenwich Village. Here were socially elect who looked down on Park Avenue as a gilded slum. Here indeed were men and women dry and fresh, smart and solemn, rich or merely famous—perpendicular extremes of our extremely perpendicular New York. And now if you looked still closer, you saw that they were listening with passionate concern to a man they call Orage (pronounce it precisely like the French for *storm*): and that Orage was most intempestuously sitting in an upholstered armchair, smoking a cigarette and cavalierly smiling.

He seems a proverbial schoolboy, slightly damaged by the years, yet on the whole intact—as he sits enwreathed in all those seeking brains and eager eyes. He has a hard body in a tight drab suit. He has hair like a cap drawn close upon his skull. The finger tips are yellow with to-

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bacco. The face is gray with thought. And its prominent part is the nose. The nose is the pinnacle of Orage. Intense brow, willful jaw, keen eyes, ironic mouth—they all converge upon this proboscidean symbol of pertinence and search.

Who is he? and what is he telling the good men and ladies, that they should hearken to him—leaders though they are—with humble rapture? He is propounding a simple, matter-of-fact psychologic method. A method too simple, really, to be written down either by him or by me. So what that Method is, you'll have to find out for yourself. What it *does*—or claims to do—is nothing less than the whole and utter overturning of everything you live by. All your standards—ethical, religious. All your darlings—historical, artistic. From Æschylus to Bertie Russell, he sweeps them off the table. From Pentateuch to Theosophy, he shows them up. All the world's religions are wrong. All the good intentions are bad. All the truths are lies. All self-improvement is vain. With a most humane smile, Orage blights the claims of humaneness. With valedictory sentiment, wipes sentiment off the slate. With logic swift as a machine, he discredits logic. With courteous manner, drops spiritual bombs into the laps of ladies who adore him.

Oh, ho! you say. Another fanatic? Yes—a most cool and balanced one. Another mystifier? Yes—one whose logical gifts gained him, long years ago, the name of the most dangerous debater in all England. He may be a poisoner of traditional wells; but what sweet venom he drips. He may be a revolutionist; but can you gainsay his classical, scholarly words? Perhaps this is a sect. But

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if the men and women whom he draws are themselves leaders of men and women?

In London they tried to keep pace with Alfred Richard Orage, and they failed. He came to that Metropolis in 1903, from the hinterlands of Birmingham and Yorkshire. He was thirty, then, and already versed in the mysteries of Socialism, Occultism, Nietzscheanism. He had written books on such timid little subjects as *The Dionysian Spirit of the Age—Consciousness; Animal, Human, Superman—An Alphabet of Economics*. Now he started a magazine with a name similarly modest (*The New Age*) and proceeded to midwife, prune, or otherwise direct a good measure of the respectable—and some of the infamous—literary reputations of the last twenty years in England. Arnold Bennett, Katharine Mansfield, Ernest Boyd, were discoveries of Orage—and so was Michael Arlen. Between these two extremes, fill in the name of your favorite British writer and most probably you'll find, somewhere upon him, the mark of this unemphatic man. Scores and scores of volumes have been dedicated to him. London knew he was *there*. Philosophy, poetry, criticism, fiction, knew it. His own essays, signed with false initials, kept a running fire on the world—and made England heartily sick, and Orage heartily hated; and incidentally, gave to English literature a prose that ranks with Shaw's and that, for pure revolutionary thought, puts Shaw in his place as the quite proper Devil of old ladies.

Orage looks like a boy and his shoulders are sharp. They have a way of shrugging—shrugging off fads and facts and systems at a pace poor slow England could not hope to

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keep up with. Before she knew it, Orage had gone through Socialism and shrugged it off: Nietzscheanism and shrugged it off: had become a psychoanalyst and shrugged it off. (I don't know what effect, if any, this had on Doctor Freud but the Freudians of England awoke one morning and found they had a subtle foe in their midst.) Then, Ouspensky, Russian mystic-mathematician, came to England.

And that is why Orage's shoulders have ceased forevermore from shrugging, and why New York is gathering in eager knots, week after week, season after season, to learn the Method whereby New York, and Culture, and Mortal Life itself, may be successfully shrugged into the ash-heap, in exchange for a Consciousness possibly Mephistophelian, possibly God-like—but avowedly not human.

The Method belongs neither to Orage nor to Ouspensky, but to their Master, Gurgieff, who visited our City several years ago, leaving Orage here ever since, like a pregnancy upon us. And Gurgieff is the Greek with a Polish wife and a Russian name, who was once Prime Minister of Tibet, who has practiced all professions from highway robbery to selling carpets, who trains his neophytes in the Sacred Eastern Dances with a brutal perfection that makes Diaghileff a tyro, and who—according to several men whom the world calls great—is the greatest man in the world.

This is no place for Cosmologies. My subject is Orage. Let me say merely this unto the fond who read in the worldly brilliance of certain of Orage's groups an argument against his value: Know your history of religions. There you will learn that the first followers of the Buddha were snobbish

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Brahmins and rich youth of Benares: and that the society ladies of that day pestered Gotama until—to be rid of them—he opened convents.

Orage believes in no convents. If you dressed him in robe and turban, he would laugh them off. He does not claim the race of Buddhas; and his one incense is the smoke of his incessant Piedmont. He talks more of Behaviorism, Astronomy and Mechanics than of what is commonly called religion. And he believes in literally nothing. *Nothing that is*, I mean. This is what makes him so detached. He knows all the scriptures from the Māhābhārata to Hart Crane, and he is detached from them all.

Even Buddha believed in the world enough to cry against it, to invent harsh disciplines to combat it. Not Orage. He despises the world so well that he is at peace with it wholly. See him by the hearth, smoking, sipping his liqueur, utterly charming his young hostess, and you will understand the superiority of his unworldliness over a mere Buddha's. Orage accepts the casual graces of the flesh, as doubtless Buddha accepted a springtime zephyr blowing in his face. Orage would no more refuse the pleasures of metropolitan New York, than a Hindu ascetic would decline a sunset.

His sensuous hospitality is the sign of his contempt. Even so, his boy face is the counterfeit of candor; and his language, which for fluent clarity has few peers in England, weaves a mist about him. Orage knows not alone the Pali Canon, but as well the Jesuits and Machiavelli. He barbs you with his words; he swathes and soothes you with his perhaps too unctuous manner—and himself glides by.

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Thus, he glided from England—shrugged it quite out of his life, leaving in London Town the smoke of his adventures and the sparks of his electric passage. The Puritan Socialism of Bernard Shaw—dear Shaw who takes liquor, meat, tobacco, coffee, tea and women so seriously that he does not take 'em at all—was not for Orage. Shaw stayed on in England: Orage—who takes 'em all—has come to our wider land.

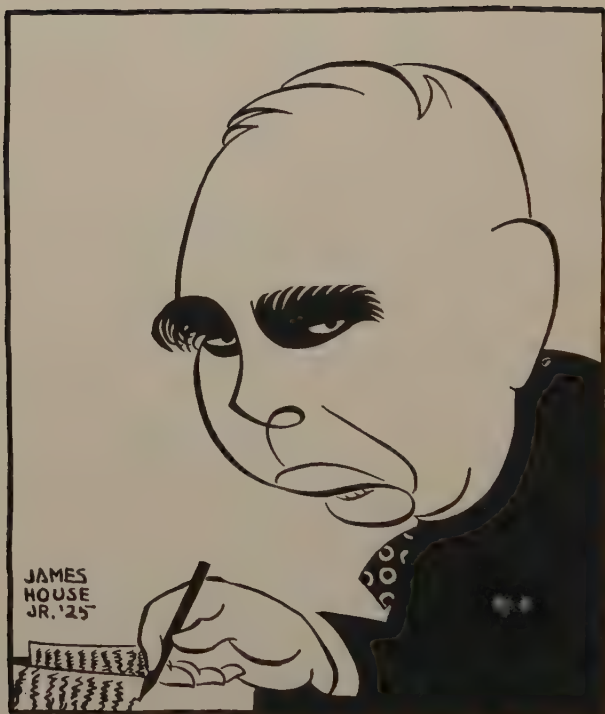
The man's life and mind is so very full of shifts that I'm justified in shifting metaphors to catch him. Thus: there is light in him, yet he has no heat. He does not push, he invades. You grow aware of him, as you might of a scentless gas when it had filled your lungs—or of a knife so edged that when it cut you, you endured no pain.

And here at last is the key which will unlock him. You recall the pin with which the great Jacques Loeb so wondrously pricked female sea-urchins into fecundity, without benefit of the male? Orage is such a fecundating pin. Neither creative nor intellectually profound, he is both since he has spent his life pricking men and women into fecundity.

This is what he did in England with Socialism, with Theosophy, with his magazine, with Freud. Until these pins grew dull. And until London grew dull. Gurgieff replenished him with sharpness. And then he came to us. Does he love us? Does he want to save our souls because he loves us? What was Loeb's sentiment toward his dear sea-urchins?

XVIII

THE COLOSSUS OF CHILDREN



THEODORE DREISER

XVIII

THE COLOSSUS OF CHILDREN

IN the good young days before the War, he was the one American novelist whom a self-respecting American radical could take time to read. He towered above the inarticulate flatlands of the Middle West. And there was none beside him.

Yet even in those good young days, he had deserted the broad Western land for which he stood, and lived in Greenwich Village.

Our first glance perhaps had been upon some afternoon. A huge, ungainly fellow, with a face poignantly sweet and pink, yet tortured by pain and overblown by passion from its inherent boyishness, sat at a dapper little desk. He rose above it, as utterly out of place as a crude phallic god might be in a lacquered cabinet for Victorian bric-à-brac. On his one hand was a bowl of oranges; on the other a bowl of pencils; and before him a small-sized yellow pad. (Upon such tiny surfaces had grown *The Titan*, *Sister Carrie*.) Athwart his shoulder on the wall hung portraits of himself by wild and incompetent emulators of the iconoclasts of Paris.

These versions of Theodore Dreiser after Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse, chimed admirably with the version of him we had formed from the romantic sentiments of our lonely

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youth. This man was the martyr of the American Novel; the one heroic warrior against legions of a commercial and Puritan world. We knew his story. How for seven years he had battled against a publisher who "killed" his first book, *Sister Carrie*. How he had been crucified by the critics. How he had been forced to edit a cheap magazine to keep alive. How his nerves had broken down, but not his spirit. How his purse was empty, but not his inspiration.

Between this version of our own, and the garish legends painted on the wall, the factual Dreiser sat, and faintly stirred a twisted mouth in a smile half canny, half naïve. His nervous fingers (he almost never smoked) played with the accordion he was forever pleating and unpleating with his handkerchief. And he said, perhaps: "America is *some* place for a novelist." Or, "If only my name was Dreiser-evski, wouldn't they just love me!" Or, "What the hell you come here to bother me for? Sit down. Have an orange. Still playing your violoncello?" . . . It did not matter.

An evening at his house sharpened the revelation. His lady had baked a cake. We had earned it, wrangling for three hours—we four in our twenties and the master, Dreiser, ruddiest of us all—upon all possible Greenwich Village subjects: Music, Marx, Mobs, Flaubert, Freedom, Fame, Proletariats, Poe, Puritanism, Paris.

Now we waited about the large bare table, while the lady set the cake before her and sat down. "A chocolate cake!" Dreiser licked his lips. The lady cut a slice. Dreiser grew nervous. The lady cut a slice. Dreiser's eyes bulged, his hands thrummed. She cut a slice. Dreiser tipped his chair,

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sprawled forward. . . . Then, the lady noticed his behavior. Swiftly, as if working against a possible crisis, the good lady put a piece of cake on a plate and handed it to Dreiser. He fell to, happy, rolling his eyes. The lady proceeded to serve Theodore Dreiser's guests. . . .

He is a symbol of America's spiritual childhood. Before the Civil War, sporadic full-grown men lived in the seaboard States—specimens of the maturity of Europe who had been transplanted without too great loss of health. The Civil War wiped this inheritance clean; and the industrial expansion of the West made America for the first time the vastly sprawling, homogeneous child whose growing pains are now so evident. For this first period of barbaric youth, Dreiser will stand as a sort of monolith. He was born in the Indiana of the seventies. His positive education consisted chiefly of a revolt from the Roman Catholicism of his parents and the hypocrisy of his town. He has gone through life with the conviction that skepticism is profundity and that revolt is act.

There is a childlike beauty in his persistence, unto this day, in the gestures of disavowal which had their meaning when America was rapt in the belief that Freedom and Science had been discovered by the First Constitutional Convention. Like a child, he is intellectually active—discovering that fire burns, and that pain is not pleasant. Like a child, he is furiously busy, piling up evidence of the physical world: such as the facts that women are sexually attractive, that monogamy is not a natural state, that business men love power, that wine intoxicates, that all the ladies who go to church are not saints, and that the earth

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is full of matters unexplained. He has the child's love of asseveration.

This world is a vale, not so much of tears, as of doubts. What little we are sure of, we cannot repeat too often! The normal child prefers to hear a story it has already heard, to one unknown. In the repetition it moves upon charted ground—conquered ground: and in a world of unknown wonders the known is the greatest wonder.

A similar impulse explains the millions of little words, same as the sands of the sea, with which Dreiser heaps his neolithic tales about the same people, the same intentions, the same conclusions. It explains as well the simple sense of wonder that dimly illumines his mastodonic structures. He is a child indeed; one not yet jaded of miracles.

If a town has a hundred and two houses and he knows how to count, it is ecstasy to count them. If a millionaire has forty suits of clothes and thirty mistresses, it is almost as good as possession to name them and describe them.

For a while Dreiser was succeeded somewhat in the public favor by other "Western novelists" who, with one or two exceptions, may be said to come under him in innocence, rather than to top him in wisdom or in power. They have sophistication where he has the enthusiasm of young life. They have a cold, half-blind disgust for the frailties of our American world, whose meticulous details Dreiser has transfigured with the glow of his own dawning mind. But now at last, after thirty years of writing, Dreiser comes into his own with the great pure public of the childish land which he so greatly and so purely stands for. *An American Tragedy* is the Dreiserian triumph.

THE COLOSSUS OF CHILDREN

It is not easy to ride through one of Dreiser's novels. It must not have been easy to make one's way from Ohio to Nevada in the age of the covered wagons. The new novels are somewhat like a journey in a Pullman. They are comfortable: they get you "there"—they give you nothing. But a Dreiser novel and the voyage of the Pioneer are similar adventures.

The endless detail of tree and plain and hill; the mournful monotony of days, the blank, dumb wonder of the alien nights, the coarse caress of the camp fare, the dull tug of passion and of dream—these in some miraculous essence are the stuff of Dreiser. He writes of cities, it is true: of servant girls and financiers in cities. But his are American cities: cities still close to the plain, and builded of the life and purposes of pioneering. His novels, like these cities, are monuments of the pioneer: and like the pioneer, they are sullen, dogged, dull—childlike but indefatigable.

Dreiser is over fifty. He has worked hard, suffered long, and come at last with his new wealth to what he considers perhaps a period of Rest. At all events, if you see him, nowadays, his ruddy face shining above the dapper clothes, and his spatted boots pounding along beside the pumps of a flapper, you have a grotesque sense of an old college boy on a vacation, or of an anachronous backwoodsman on a Sunday. Dreiser, clumsy and puffy, on a holiday at fifty, is as childlike as twenty years ago he was childlike in his rebellion and his art.

His mind is as well stocked with nineteenth-century scientific fallacies as was his grandfather's perhaps, with mediæval myths. He has no power of analysis, no eye for characteri-

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zation. He is cultureless, formless, uncontrolled. And yet, he has the grace of one who has lived truly, he has the light and the mysterious mark of genius. If there be any writer in our midst worthy of our homage, worthy to be called our master, it is this neolithic Dreiser. For such a child as he, courageous, enthusiastic, spiritually pure, must be father to the American Man—if ever there is to be one.

XIX
AN ENTIRE PERSON



1927-1928

KATHERINE CORNELL

XIX

AN ENTIRE PERSON

HER face is a mask yet more alive than most faces. Some Master of whom both Picasso and Brancusi were disciples might have designed it. The brow is flat, the cheeks are square; the mouth, round, large-lipped, is strong as tragedy and tremorous as girlhood. The wide-set eyes gaze at you unstirring. Her body might be the stem of a lily in a tropic sea, cool, tender, sinuous and tough. The roots of the woman are in a hidden soil. And yet her hands and eyes are full of sun. This mask face changes: this almost art-like creature is playful and naïve. Her voice strokes you. Her smile has the fragrance of gracious self-bestowal. Still the sense of the mask persists—of the hidden roots—of something remote and not self-giving at all. . . .

Description and analysis won't get us Katherine Cornell. She's not too simple to portray, too complex to take apart. The difficulty's elsewhere. She is not a person with this quality, that talent. The first thing to know about her is as well the last: she is indivisibly herself. A part of her is not a key to her. *Wholeness* is in each of her aspects.

Perhaps this explains, somewhat, her place in the synthetic world of Broadway. Parts are so common in this life of ours which is indeed a stage. Wholes are so rare. The

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world's run largely by *partial* people: folk who can do just this, just that; stunt folk, specialty folk, little bits of men and women who assemble the Machine Age as if they were individual nuts, cranks, gears and levers. Yet despite the Machine and the fate of us all to do our part in it—our so replaceable part—we are still hungry for another kind of world: for the world of spirit in which each one of us is not a part, not replaceable; but in some mystic way is entire and is eternal.

This, I suspect, is the deep cause for Kit Cornell's quiet emergence among the young actresses of her generation. Almost imperceptibly, surely with no self-touting and no pushing, she has made for herself that most unusual fame in the theater, which depends neither on particular rôles nor on particular success. She is Katherine Cornell. By and large, they in our land who have loving hopes for the theater know of her and hold her high in their hopes. Of course, she has won this place because she *is* an actress. She knows her job: her technique has mastery of myriad subtle, invisible controls. But she is the actress she is, because of the woman she is. And if you would understand her *Candida* or her *Iris*, you must first see Cornell.

If you watch her now, it is hard to picture the girl she was. On a winter morning, she trudges through the snow on Queensboro Bridge: she throws gay laughter into the smoke at Sardi's: she wisecracks with Al Woods; she presides at ease at her own table with a huge candelabra behind and crowning her head. Yet once she was a schoolgirl brooding, gloomy, convinced of her lack of charms and out of place. Her father was the manager of a Buffalo playhouse.

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And Katherine, who felt she was a "misfit" found her first release in amateur theatricals at school. When she acted, she was free. She was a hero or a heroine, then. She knew it wasn't "true": she accepted this mock happiness of acting as the best she could hope for. Here is the strangest paradox of all. Katherine was no girl full of impossible dreams. She expected no largess of life. She was very humble, scarce ambitious at all. To-day, she is ambitious indeed: and as humble as ever. The amazing favor she has won from those her intelligence most favors amazes her, and yet does not touch her. Deep down, she does not believe it. The glamour of her life is but a play she is acting. She is the heroine on a stage: and on the stage, she has ever been able to work, to think, to keep cool. The metropolitan glamour has not moved her, save to make her sober—and to make her work, more humbly than ever.

After Buffalo, she became a coach in dramatics in a girls' finishing school on the Hudson. She wrote a play. And finally, in 1916, she stood beside Helen Westley on the stage of the Washington Square Players, her large eyes pivoted between fear and amusement: and asked for her first part. She got one in *Bushido*, then in Maeterlinck's *Mort de Tintagile*. A bit later, she went into stock—where she met Guthrie McClintic, her husband. And the rest you know.

Most actors put on a rôle as they put on a costume. If they're clever, the thing fits, it covers them from head to foot. No personal excrescence, no alien patch is visible to mar the effect. We are satisfied with that. We call that good acting. But the acting of Cornell is *organic*. From Jo in *Little Women* through *Candida* to the naughty *Iris*,

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she has *put on* no rôle at all. The life comes from inside her. Naturally it unfolds from some seed of intuition. And when at last it reaches the surface of stage form where your eye takes it, quite wholly the body of the rôle is the body of this woman. She has created her part: with her flesh and blood borne it. That is why Katherine Cornell *is* mellow-maternal-humorous-gravid as Candida: *is* a flash of disdain whipping the sterile pools of passion as Iris March. She does not have to change her voice, her gesture. Her body changes. It is heavy and luminous—or it is sharp and darkling. The seed is in her. She is a woman possessed and creating. A woman . . .

Her husband, McClintic, who knows her well, has said that the secret of Cornell's art lies in her use of the pause. Now you see why. The rôle that is a costume dare not pause: for a pause is a break. Word and gesture must spread everywhere. But when the rôle is an organic living thing, merely radiating forth in word and gesture, the pause is not a break, it is a revelation. You will feel the character as you feel all life, most poignantly in silence.

So we are back to the woman: to a person sufficiently whole to create life beyond herself. As such she counts in a machine-whelmed world; in a world of men and women whose way of "counting" is so often to turn themselves into intricate well-fitting little gears and levers.

And yet the girl who felt she was a misfit was prophetically right. In this world that welcomes her, Kate Cornell is out of place. And the world welcomes her for no deeper reason than her difference from it. Because of this, it uses

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her and will abuse—will use her up, if only it gets the chance.

Katherine Cornell begins to know this. That is why, under her cheer, there is diffidence; under her genuine surprise at the good hearts she encounters, wariness and even coldness. She is not altogether sure of what the world wants with her: and this has made her look into herself.

Her reserve is growing, although it is so keen that most of her associates do not guess, nor ever will, its presence. She is coming to accept her queenliness: the more, since it is not a matter of electric lights, of stardom, of other stuffs which she could see through. A sense of destiny steals over the young woman.

When she is quiet at home, you sense it: a shadow of bewilderment on the open eyes, a pain dulling the too frail bloom of her face. She looks out of her window in Beekman Place, at the running river. One hand strokes the head of her police dog. Her profile is sharp as the glass. And the great city is remote. Here is a pause in the life of Katherine Cornell more revealing even than the pauses in her art. She is thinking of how magical and unguessed was the Hand which guided her from her miserable girlhood into this solstice of fortune. And she is doubting the Hand. She must trust it less and less. She must grow conscious where she has been unconscious. She must detach herself even from her art. *She* must guide where Fate guided.

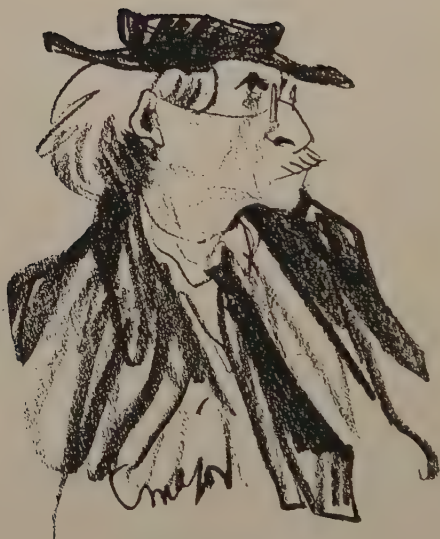
This sober, searching note under the brilliant carelessness of Cornell: this sturdiness upon her frailty. The Hand gave her the gifts to become the actress she is. But here is

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something else: a will to pause, even in success, and to grow conscious: a will to be herself and to build her life. Everything is against this will: the whole flood tide of the world she lives in is against it. If it grows, Katherine Cornell will become what is rarer than talent , , , an entire person.

XX

THE PROPHET



ALFRED STIEGLITZ

XX

THE PROPHET

HE dresses like a business man; he looks like a Bedouin. In his letters he signs himself with a number: 291. And if you were to tell him that this is a characteristic of the inhabitants of Sing Sing, he would say: "Well, why not? Perhaps we have more than that in common."

In Europe, they know him perhaps more widely than here as Alfred Stieglitz, the first and supreme master of the photograph. He has been invited to live in Germany where, they assure him, "they can use him." Last year a crony of Albert Einstein came over and begged him to join their little group since in spirit and in work he was one of them already. But Stieglitz will never leave America. He loves his land too bitterly and too well. Where else could he hope to receive such copious draughts of unrecognition? Where else find such occasion to suffer creatively and loudly?

Of course, 291 was once the number of the house on Fifth Avenue where Stieglitz opened the Photo-Secession Gallery twenty years ago. Here, our good citizens and critics had their first chance to howl at Cézanne, sneer at Matisse, gasp at Picasso, turn away from Rodin. Here our native art patrons, faced by a gray-haired, exquisite-lipped seer who never was silent and who, talking wildly of himself, seemed miraculously to be revealing all the world, were made for the

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first time to feel that their purchases of Rembrandt and Reynolds were not so smart as they had thought. They were amazed at being forced to look at native atrocities signed Marin, Dove, Walkowitz, Weber, Hartley—which at the end they bought at European figures.

Then came the War. In the deluge of general progress, the gallery at 291 dwindled and disappeared. Even the old building had to give way for a modern structure. Stieglitz recalled that he had been a photographer of parts before the times conspired to make him chief prophet to the Philistines and the provider of food, roof and spiritual nurture to a large proportion of the American artists who since have become famous even among the Philistines. He began once more to turn his camera upon the faces of men, the bodies of women, upon the skies and the trees. He saw deep; he made his camera see deep. Issued forth that procession of inscrutable records which artists and scientists agree to accept as unprecedented marvels: for they are mere sincere, mechanical equivalents of natural scenes and stuffs and yet possess the plastic qualities, the compositional depth of works of art.

These are phases of the man: his pictures, his marketing and boosting (of course without a fee) of the pictures of others, his perpetual personal care of the makers of pictures. But Stieglitz has another activity which is constant—and essential. He talks. He has talked for thirty years. His photographs are marvels; his educational influence on the cultural milieu has been far greater than that of twenty preachers and professors. But all this is as nothing compared to the prophetic and Homeric nature of his talk.

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Once, long ago before the Gallery of 291, in the days when Stieglitz was putting photography "on the map," he went to London purposely to talk to Bernard Shaw who had said some silly things on the subject. He caught cold on the channel and when he arrived at his hotel, he had lost his voice. He was lunching with Shaw on the morrow. He wired, breaking his engagement and left England at once. Unable to talk to Shaw, he did not wish to see him: he did not wish to hear Shaw talk to him.

This anecdote reveals much of Alfred Stieglitz, and of his ruthless self-direction. The most monomaniac money magnate is a loafer and wool-gatherer in the business of earning, compared with the intensity of Stieglitz in his business of *seeking*. Quite literally this man is devoting *all his life* to a quest of the truth. Not a tithe of it, mind you: not what is left over after filling his belly, after getting on in the world, after serving his friends, after loving his family. **ALL HIS LIFE.** Eating, sleeping, friendship, work and play have no reality for Alfred Stieglitz, save in so far as they serve him in his quest. He has helped more persons than is required by any church: but he does not care about persons. He has launched the art of a new century in a new world: but he does not care about art. He is hunting the truth. And like a vigilant bug whose antennæ are forever vibrant before it, so the voice of Stieglitz, which never tires, never subsides—which is his instrument of contact with the raw materials of life—the people whom he meets—from whom he extracts his spiritual food.

You will see now why Stieglitz's talk differs from that of other men; and why, being unable to talk to Shaw, he did

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not care to see him. Stieglitz will talk to you for two hours. At the end whereof, you may be exhausted: but he *knows you*. His words have agglutinated you (digested you), (swallowed) you. If you let Stieglitz talk to you for a year, you will have become wholly part of Stieglitz.

And you will now understand the true purpose of his exhibitions—the old ones at 291 Fifth Avenue or the more recent at the Anderson Galleries. It is true that when Stieglitz gives a Show, the best of America or Europe is likely to be on the walls. This is because the best is bait for the best people. And Stieglitz wants the best people to come to his shows, so that he can talk to the best people—so that he can stimulate the best people; turn them into his own spiritual food. Innocent art lovers complain.

“We come here to admire these things,” they say, “and the noisy old man talks so much we can’t see the pictures.”

They do not get the point. Stieglitz does not care whether they see the pictures or no: *he* wants to see *them*. And his eyes are words, his digestive apparatus is words: with his words he “eats ’em alive.”

The failure to understand this simple metaphysical fact explains the sentimental gloss which for many years our young adventurers in the arts have been writing about Stieglitz. It is true that he used to have a table at the old Holland House where any hungry artist was sure at least of a lunch; it is true that Arthur Dove, John Marin, Abraham Walkowitz, Georgia O’Keeffe, Max Weber, Marsden Hartley, etc., etc., were fathered by this man; and it is true that he will show to any visitor at any hour his own photographs—a true *Divina Commedia*, ranging from the Inferno

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of his early pictures of the city, through the Purgatory of his portraits of friends, to the Paradise—the latest set of studies of clouds, sun, mist, ethereal space that holds a divinity and an infinity of vision. But all of these are means to the Stieglitzian end. He is hunting, feeling, for the truth. His friends and the art of all the ages are to him what mice and monkeys are to the vivisectioning scientist.

His voice, then, is his weapon—as it was the weapon of the older prophets. And a machine—the camera—is his tool for revelation. In this use of a mechanical and natural force, he is still closer to the old men of religion. They, too, employed what machines, what scientific devices, what natural powers they could manage, to bare the gods to man. Stieglitz with his camera is careful to assure you that he is not an artist. He is a thaumaturgist, if you prefer the term, bringing the wonder and the glory of the world by physical means into the minds of men.

His life is a dynamic gesture, as of Life itself, trying to find out what Life is. Can you imagine God moving a finger over His own Body in an effort of self-understanding? That slightly metaphysical image is the closest symbol I can get for Stieglitz. He himself is such a finger. Not his mind, not his will—his very physical life is Search. And that unfaltering voice which has worn out so many of his friends is his essential feature: moving forever forward into the Mystery, seeking, testing, enveloping, creating, passing. . . .

XXI

AN ACCOUNT OF A JOINT REPORT

*Made to Jehovah on the Condition of Man in the
City of New York (1926) by Aristotle, Julius
Cæsar and a Third Individual of Less
Importance*

XXI

A JOINT REPORT

JEHOVAH suddenly was reminded of the earth. It was long since He had looked that way. His interest was not strong enough to suggest to Him a personal journey. He was past that sort of thing. He had, indeed, heard rumors of great changes in terrestrial locomotion: He was loth to trust Himself to new contraptions—coaches that ran without horses, ships that sailed without sails. And yet He had come to be bored by the stereotyped official news of the Archangels. He called Aristotle and Julius Cæsar.

“Go to the most active, the most influential spot on Earth, and tell me what you find.”

The following morning Cæsar waited in the anteroom, humming a song from the Music Box Revue. When he was admitted, a number of lesser spirits were already in the Presence.

“I went, of course, to New York,” he began. “I am afraid my words and the celestial experience alike will fail to do justice to the perfection of that work of man. New York is a mechanism—an impeccable mechanism. Millions of human beings live, work, play in lubricated ease, upon a patch of ground so crowded that they have had to do away with trees, and with all except the minimum of air needed for

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breathing. The soil underfoot is a maze of cellars, pipes, conduits, tunnels, wires. By means of them, the traffic, the lights, the messages, the sewage of this host flow flawlessly. Trillions of words, billions of letters, millions of parcels and human bodies—galaxies of electric current, nebulæ of gas, seas and rivers of refuse—go each their predestined way without confusion.”

At this point, Aristotle hurried in, nervous that he was late. In his arms were huge bundles of periodicals and papers.

Cæsar continued: “Each of the myriad houses is a still more intricate labyrinth of wires and pipes. In perpendicular shafts, swift cars shoot up and down; and the numberless apartments are honeycombed with conduits leading to the sewers, to great coils of telephonic wires, or to the buzzing air. The streets are channels, not for single homogeneous streams like water—not for such simple motions as the stars, flowing with geodesic ease over the hills of Space. These streets contain an incredible coil of vehicles and persons, each self-directed . . . myriads of forces which, if one follow them, are seen to trace the most fantastic patterns: spirals, helices, tratices, polyhedra. And yet they never collide, they never impede each other! They run indeed like the immaculate parts of an immaculate Machine!

“Your Worship, I have but begun. Even the air has been woven by these human wills which are so complex, so various, yet so unitary. The subtle strands of the electric ether have been wound into service. The cosmic currents are tamed, and bended down upon the forest of receiving wires that screen the roofs of the City. And by their means,

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the infinitely complex City life is made to irradiate and to interweave with the life of other equally complex centers. Every room, already joined by phantasmagoria of wires and pipes with the whole urban mechanism, participates with rooms leagues distant—with a thousand cities at a time! From the thick of the earth to the thin of ether, these master men have enacted a Machine whose intricacy of response and of control makes the graph of the subtlest brain of classic man as flat by contrast as a sheet of parchment!"

Jehovah rubbed His hands.

"Splendid!" He said. "Splendid! These men have grown up. They no longer need me."

He was glad, for He felt justified in the obvious fact that for long other worlds than Earth had absorbed His interest. He turned to Aristotle.

"Sire," said the well-known Greek, "look rather to Your Milky Ways: they are more likely to bump and to need Your help. The suns beyond the field of Cygni are more liable to miss their step and clash with the anti-suns of Alpha, than these marvelously regimented men. I have been examining their intellectual life. I have read their papers, gone to their colleges and theaters, attended their singing cabarets and legislatures; I have sat in their courts and worshiped in their temples. At first I believed that there must be one prolific and ubiquitous dictator who wrote all their books under a thousand names, preached simultaneously in church and synagogue, directed the platforms of opposition parties, taught Latin, Literature and Physics in all the universities . . . I did this people an injustice. They are uniform, indeed. They tolerate no idea

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which runs radically counter to their complacent rhythm. Even the imagination of their poets has been tamed: even the indignation of their prophets. They have one Value, one Ideal: and no word rises against them."

"The City is a symbol of the American land and of what Earth is becoming," put in Julius Cæsar. "I have described how everything is channeled, how everything moves as it should in its all-perfect place, in the marvelously complex city. I need scarcely add that this is man's ideal. It means that the social body of men has achieved the sort of health that perfect circulation, even temperature, and truly balanced organs bring to the physical body. These men are in bliss. We hear the stars sing, when we are silent enough in our continuous discussions to let their music penetrate to Heaven. We know that they sing, because they move pleasantly in their Spatial grooves. I assure you, Your Worship, that the Spatial courses are jerrybuilt and hazardous, compared to the traffic-lines, the wire-patterns, the radio statics, the intellectual convictions and the plumbing and sewage systems of New York! What music must have these men!"

"Was it a sample thereof you were humming, as you came in?"

The spirit who put this unexpected question to Cæsar was the latest arrival from man's earth to Heaven. Measured by terrestrial time, he had been in Paradise but two centuries and a half. And these were the very first words he had been heard to speak since Jehovah had let him in. (He had since had His misgivings, for the man was not much of a social asset.)

A JOINT REPORT

The audience of spirits leaned with interest toward the questioner. Cæsar glowered. At last Jehovah spoke:

"Our young friend has asked you a question, Julius. Won't you answer it? He is a man of few words. We should encourage him."

But Cæsar turned in disdain away. Aristotle broke the uncomfortable silence. Said he:

"Perhaps the true music of that world is the hum made by the fusion of all these comings and goings, twinings and bendings, leapings and dippings, crossings and anglings—the fusion of this multiverse of words, forms, streams—into the ineffable unity of Organization."

"Jehovah," spoke Heaven's latest comer, "I, too, have visited the city whereof Cæsar and Aristotle speak. I have done this, without Your permission. It is only fair that I confess it. But I am near-sighted, Sire. I could not, like Cæsar, obtain a bird's-eye view. Nor am I so quick on my feet as Your other messenger. When I lived on Earth, I was a polisher of lenses. My eyes acquired the habit of peering close. So, in lieu of hovering on wings above the city as did Cæsar—I admit that I'm a trifle unsteady on them still—I went down into this wondrous mechanism, down into the soul of a man."

"What did you find there?" Jehovah's brow had clouded.

"Confusion," came the answer. "Turmoil and darkness. Chaos. A pitiful knocking about, and longing. Within that soul, many wills forceless, many desires eyeless, many dreams unsolaced, and the sum of it all was bitter emptiness. I found abject disorder. I found desperate incompetence. I found misery. And hunger . . ."

TIME EXPOSURES

Jehovah drummed His toes on the cloud that served Him as a footstool.

"Here," He frowned, "this is another story."

He turned, questioning and hopeful, to Cæsar and to Aristotle.

"Sire," replied the Roman, "we did not deign to notice such things as individual souls."

"Sire," the Stagirite made answer, "what if this be true? If these uncounted miseries and failures of petty men make up a Whole so perfect?"

But Jehovah was still troubled.

"Let me see," He said, turning to the obscure newcomer; "I forget—your name—?"

"Spinoza."

Jehovah strained His fingers through His beard. Suddenly He straightened with resolution. He pointed a hand at Heaven's latest comer who with quiet myopic eyes studied this strange mood in Heaven's King. And Jehovah spake unto Spinoza, and He said:

"I do not like what you have said. You have upset me. But I know your kind. From now on, you'd be pestering me—until you had your way. There'll be no peace in Heaven—until I do what you are hankering for. I'd like to send you to the Devil. But even that would not save me. Even down there, you would haunt me."

And with a flourish of resignation, Jehovah gave orders to prepare Him for a journey . . .

THE END

